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# CAVALRY SAM; or, The Raiders of the Shenandoah.

BY CAPTAIN MARK WILTON.

A Thrilling Tale of Sheridan and His Men.



Cavalry Sam's Sword Combat with the Guerrilla of the Shenandoah.

## CAVALRY SAM:

—OR—

## The Dashing Rider of the Shenandoah.

BY CAPT. MARK WILSON.

## CHAPTER I.

## THE GATHERING STORM.

A dark cloud was over the land of freedom. The long pent-up fires of discord were showing increasing venom, and there was every indication that the threatening volcano would soon belch forth its stream of destruction.

Sectional animosity was going from bad to worse, and if the signs were not deceptive, grim war would soon stalk hand in hand with death across fair fields and over peaceful thresholds.

It was the spring of 1861, and every inhabitant of the United States was in a state of nervous expectancy.

Down in South Carolina, an ominous prologue was being enacted, which presaged a red drama.

General Beauregard lay threateningly before Fort Sumter, and the whole country was listening for the sound of the first gun.

All expected it, but hoped to see the storm pass by, and their heritage of freedom left intact.

On a pleasant day in April, a single horseman was riding at an easy canter along the road, on the eastern bank of the Shenandoah River, and at a point west of Manassas Gap. It was fair and pleasant ground, and he went, as he passed grand plantations, where lived the chivalry of Virginia.

The rider, himself, did not look less aristocratic than the proud dwellers by the old river; in fact, a nobler specimen of mankind had seldom been seen on the broad road. Youth, strength and manly comeliness were his visible endowments, and if the costly but modest style of dress went for anything, wealth might be added to the others.

He was about twenty-five years of age, six feet in height, broad of shoulders, full of chest, and with long arms and large hands, which indicated great strength.

Such a man might have been a gladiator in the old days, but the white hands and dress of the lone rider showed that he was not among those who toiled for a living.

As he turned abruptly to the left, and went on more rapidly, he made a fine appearance. Mounted on a large black horse, he sat in the saddle like a Centaur, every movement full of ease and grace, and few persons would pass him without taking an additional look.

With his fine form and face, his dark eyes, heavy mustache, and black, curling hair, he somehow brought up thoughts of the old-time knights of chivalry, and proud indeed might be the man or woman who called him friend.

For two miles after leaving the river-road, he rode as before, and then moderated his pace as he came in sight of a grand old plantation.

Broad fields were there, and all richly cultivated, while the house, half-ancient, half-modern, bespoke the wealth of its owner.

It was a fine scene, but one so familiar to the rider, that he gave only a casual glance and went on toward the house. A negro boy, about sixteen years, was fast asleep on the grass, and at the sight of a flash of mischief passed over the horseman's face.

The soft footfall deadened all sound of his approach, and he rode close to the boy, bent from his saddle, and, seizing him by the heels, lifted him clear off the ground, and left him hanging limp and down.

The colored youth's face was superlatively black—came out of his blissful unconsciousness with a yelp and a squirm which betrayed his alarm, but the tall rider held fast, and began to laugh loudly.

Evidently the boy at first believed himself in some dreadful danger, but as he managed to gain sight of the other's face his mood changed, and, despite his position, a broad grin overspread his chubby face.

"Hi! is dat you, Massa Sam?" he cried. "Thought dat Tom Millet got me, suah. Wat for you serbe niggar dis way, sah? Ah! you carry me to de jail."

"I'm trying to elevate the colored race, you black rascal," laughed the horseman. "What are you kicking for? Can't you bear your honors more modestly?"

"Fore de Lord, Massa Sam, you done put me Niggar in my head, an' de current runs de

wrong way. Left me go, will ye, sah, fore Massa Warburton loses his best nigger. Tain't sah!"

The boy was taking all in good part, but Sam, as he had called the rider, knew the position was not comfortable, and by a quick movement he reversed the youth and set him on his feet.

"There you are, my gay Cleon, all safe and sound, though it isn't your good wit that makes you so. If Tom Millet had caught you, and sent you to the jail, you'd have cracked his whip on the best darky on the plantation."

"Hi! hil let me alone fur dat, sah. Tom, he gone down to de village an' I tek a sleep with de sun, an' you know, you tek dis niggar asleep, not mush, Massa Sam."

"See to it he don't," said Sam, more seriously.

He liked this chubby colored boy well, knowing him to be honest and faithful as the day was long, and many a prank like that recorded, had they had together. Sam Carrington owned a plantation of his own, and for the many years he had lived he had no false pride, and his sable workmen clung to "Massa Sam" as to a rock.

What more the planter might have said is uncertain, for at that moment he caught sight of a lady on the piazza of the house who seemed to be watching him closely.

He sprang from his black horse, tossed the rein to Cleon, and went lightly up the steps, as he called for the lady, Mary Ann, to Warburton, the daughter of a near neighbor—the owner of the plantation—he had come to visit.

They were acquaintances of many years, and had always been on good terms, though the dissimilarity of their natures had always stood between them in a measure. He was frank, free, joyous and rollicking; she, with all her beauty, her genius, and her education, was a more complex creature, reputed for benevolence and kindness of heart, so bound up in family pride and its toils that he was often disturbed if not disgusted.

She looked like a beautiful statue, as she stood ready to receive him, but with the blindness of his frank and happy-go-lucky nature, he did not perceive the severe and even frowning expression on her face. He expected to find the same Mary Ann, to Warburton, the daughter of a near neighbor—the owner of the plantation—he had come to visit.

"Hi!" he said, starting. "I'm not sure I understood you, but I may have heard aright. Have I enlisted? That depends. As your admirer, I have, but, otherwise—"

"You speak with more care," interrupted the girl, and even Sam saw the strange, red flush on her cheeks. "I am not in a mood for jesting. I mean, have you joined the Confederate army to fight against our Northern oppressors?"

His face grew suddenly grave.

"I trust the day will never come when any one will do that," he proudly said.

"Man, have you not heard the news?" she cried. "One would think you an actual hermit. Do you know what day it is? The twelfth of April, 1861—the day and the day when a new republic has been born, and a yoke of tyranny thrown off the sons of the South. The twelfth of April, Samuel Carrington—and yet, you have not heard the news?"

At a word, I have been twenty-four hours in the swamp with Amariah Strout, and no one has crossed my path since then. Is there news? Nothing serious, I hope."

"It will prove serious for the North," was the reply, "for on this morning the first voice of freedom has been heard. The firing on Fort Sumter has begun!"

Samuel Carrington moved backward at the last words, and his lady's face flashed out like a trauger might have thought the signs indicative of a craven's fear, but even the proud girl before him knew that he braver man than he lived in old Virginia.

"No!" he exclaimed, half incredulously, half as though pleading for her to withdraw her assertion.

"And say, 'Yes.' This morning the battle was fought, and, I doubt not, the Garrison is ere this in the hands of our soldiers—ours, Mr. Carrington; the soldiers of an united South, the new patriots of our country."

He saw then that she was in earnest, but his handsome face was sterner and more gloomy than she had ever before seen it.

"They are mad!" he exclaimed. "I did not expect to find you so full of thought, but your preparations would fall through in

spite of all. And they have fired on the old flag, planning to dismember our broad country! Just Heaven! and these men are my countrymen!"

"More," resumed the heiress; "they are your fellow Virginians; they are heroes." "They are mad," cried the girl, who called Carrington, his color returning like mad. "Heroes they are, but they are mad, mad!"

"And why mad?"

"Because they have fired on the old flag." "But we are all loyal," she becomes an emblem of tyranny, it is time to fire on it. I tell you, Samuel Carrington, those men are destined to rank with those patriots who fought at Lexington, at Bunker Hill and at Saratoga, and some glorious field of Virginia they will win their final laurels as the men of '76 won them from Cornwallis."

Miss Warburton spoke with enthusiasm. Her form was drawn to its utmost height, she looked like a queen delivering a prophecy. Still, the man before her scarcely knew what she said.

"A civil war," he darkly muttered. "Men slaughtering, devastation, houses ruined and women suffering for clothing and food. Such are the attendants of war. And the sunny South, the South I love so well, will be crushed under the iron crown 'n' stake. Poor Virginia—poor Virginia."

He put his hand to his forehead with a gesture which almost maddened Miss Warburton. In that hour when she was so enthusiastic, she was now so thoughtful, and she turned to the quick to see this man with his youth and great gifts from nature fall into so gloomy a mood.

He was trembling when, in her opinion, he should have been full of fervor and joy.

## CHAPTER II.

"THERE IS NO MIDDLE COURSE."

"Samuel Carrington," cried the girl, passionately, "what am I to think of you? Men have called you brave, and you are as good a shot and rider as lives in the Old Dominion. No one excels you. More than that, you are a Virginian born and bred, and our state is going with the united South. More than that, her geographical situation will give to her soil the majority of battlefields. It will be the line of the great Mason and Dixon's line. Sir, will you not be found fighting among the foremost?"

"I may be found fighting," he answered, in a low voice. "I will fight if I shall fight; but it will not be against the stars and stripes. It will be under the old flag and for a united country."

Augusta fairly awoke. Before she had thought him tame, perhaps cowardly; but now she had heard worse. He would be against the South, against Virginia, against even.

But it was so horrible, she could not contemplate it.

Before she could answer, however, another girl glided to her side; one as fair, though less quietly, and the second daughter of Warburton. Sisters they were, and only separated by two years in point of age, but while Augusta was a woman and a queen in seeming, Vida, at seventeen, unlike the average Southern girl, seemed still a child.

"I have heard you say," she said, earnestly said, "for I am with you for the Union. Augusta may decide if she will, but you and I will remain loyal."

Augusta crossed her face at the end, showing that she did not fully comprehend the seriousness of the national crisis, but Carrington was all in earnest, as he added:

"We will, to the end."

"Glad to hear," she said, severely, "how dare you speak such words? You, a Warburton, and to raise your voice against your native State. For shame!"

Augusta could be said a call sounded from the town and they looked to see two men who had approached unseen. One was on horseback, and a handsome young fellow he was. A trifle younger than Sam, he had the same stamp of a Southerner, but in his face was a frankness, honesty and earnestness which bespoke a man who would do no mean act and who had an indomitable will to carry out a settled purpose.

He was a man of a new type, earnestly, and was named Alfred Penrock.

His companion was less attractive. A man of middle age, stoutly built and ill-clad, his expression was stern, and his face stamped him a man of low and vicious ways, if not a villain. Bronzed by sun and rain, strong drink had given even a deeper hue to his nose and cheeks, and his eyes were set in a dead, unkind, and one searching for an illustration.



tion of a hang-dog rascal would not be apt to pass by Jacob Shelley.

Here, beside the horse, looking straight at Sam Carrington, and scowling blackly, while at the sight even the latter's face clouded.

"You before Shelley had been Warburton's overseer, but a number of small rascalities had been brought to his master's notice by Carrington, and since then he had not been allowed on the plantation."

"I am surprised and a little alarmed at seeing him, but he stood boldly, even defiantly, and still stared at Carrington."

"Hallo, Sam!" said Alfred Penrock, "come here, and let me see a life. I have sprained an ankle, and only for Shelley's aid I might have slept in the swamp to-night."

"The man addressed forgot all else, and went quickly to Penrock. Borne up, the two had been, and either one would risk his life for the other."

"Sam assisted him to the piazza, while Shelley watched in a surly way, but, though the horse was his, he still lingered. Penrock chanced to see him, and started up from his seat, only to fall back and wince from pain."

"I had forgotten his reward," he said. "Come here, my man, and name your price."

"Make it what you will," said the ex-overseer, touching his misshapen hat, in an attempt to put away the Virginian. "I shall all be drawn good pay soon, an' then I hope ter feller you two men in battle."

"He can if he will, Sam, and one of us ought to receive a colonel's commission. Luckily, this sprain is but slight, and I don't intend that you shall be ahead of me in enlisting."

"The old story," muttered Carrington, glancing at the two, "are all mad as a war."

"We are wild with exultation to gain secure the liberty won for us by the men of '76," Penrock said, his fine face lighting with a gleam of enthusiasm. "Ah, there will come more, be great deeds in old Virginia, and other great names will be enrolled side by side with those of Washington, Marion and Greene."

"The young man's will be thar, o' course," said the ex-overseer, with a strange look on his ill-favored face.

"Certainly it will be there, and I know of no man more likely to lead the Virginians in the grand attempt."

But no answering gleam came to Sam Carrington's face. Grave even to sternness, his look was one of mild surprise. Penrock turned to the Virginian, who had been steadily said, "it will be to uphold the old flag and an undivided union of states."

"The younger man sat agast. Of all things he had least expected to hear such a declaration. In the years that were passed people had called his friend Mad Sam, and when they saw a horse going over a fence they believed it was his. Said the Virginian, "these were sure to be found floating behind. His wild gallops across country had been the talk of the whole neighborhood; and as he had not wholly outgrown his boyish pranks, Alfred had been thinking, had a noble and dashing soldier he would make, so, it was no wonder he was astonished."

But, while he looked amazed, a gleam of light in the Virginian's face, as he saw Shelley's face which pictured his heart. He was longing for a chance to pay off the old score.

Penrock recovered his tongue, and a long discussion followed. He was at first inclined to make light of Sam's assertion, but when he saw that he was in full earnest, his way changed to pleading. He was himself a Virginian, and with the war on, he was loving his friend like a brother, his words were like cutting knives.

"This is the result of an education at the North," Augusta finally broke in, passionately. "I remember that when you went away my father said to yours: 'No good will come of it. Beware, lest the boy draw poison from Northern air.' We are not the words of Northern men," Sam Carrington said, the Northern color, and then to Europe; now he has come back to us to turn his back on his own people."

"B.B.," said the Union, "Vida added. While Augusta had been speaking, Penrock had chanced to look at Shelley, and the expression on the fellow's face alarmed him, the reflection of the war, the war, the war, he knew the man felt toward Sam, and he hastily held out his hand."

"I had forgotten you again," he said, "and for determining you, for I remember you said you were in haste. Here is a gold piece to pay you for your trouble."

Shelley took the money and turned away

but there was an additional surliness on his face.

"Fred had skillfully dismissed him, but he would much rather have remained to use his ears."

He mounted his ungainly horse and rode away, but at the first turn swung around to the left and pushed on toward the swamp where his home had been since his situation on the plantation had been lost.

"I have muttered, and as I wait, I begin to think that Sam Carrington is inclined to kick over the traces, just as I expected he would. He is going again Virginia, an' I don't get revenge for the past I am a liar. There soon be a frothy forkent here an' ev'ry man must enlist or shirk. He will do the latter, an' it won't be very hard ter get up an excitement against him which will end his life. Ha, ha! he stepped up a tiger when he robbed me o' my job."

By that time the quartet he had left had entirely forgotten his existence in their ear-ear discussion.

Augusta—bush of her, more anon.

Penrock was deeply pained and amazed. Sam had never been inclined to talk of the national troubles, and for politics he had the utmost contempt, but his friend had never suspected that he would be lukewarm when trouble came. Less than an hour before, he had been thinking what a noble leader he would make for some Virginian regiment.

Brave, dashing, magnetic, a fine swordsman, marksman and rider; such men were sure to go to the front in the struggle. And yet he had seemed to have suddenly accepted the man's question.

Since he had heard the news his gay laugh had not once sounded, and across his manly face the old smile had evidently forgotten his place.

He saw with the prophetic eye of an intelligent man, what must follow if war came, for war is always dreadful.

Devastated fields and broken homes, untimely graves and ruined names. Sam Carrington shuddered and failed to catch the enthusiasm of his friend.

And when he rode away, it was in a fashion far different from his old dash and gaiety. Twilight was falling, but he went on with loosened rein, and rode unheeding past gloomy swamps where desperate fugitive slaves had hid and but too often had done deeds of violence.

"You must side with one of the hostile parties," Alfred Penrock had said to him, "or you are no middle course."

He knew was true, and the knowledge brought the fiercest pang of his life.

And at the same moment Augusta Warburton was in her chamber, her face full of pain, her hand nervously working in the folds of her dress.

"What will come of it?" she was murmuring. "He is brave, noble, but mad. Can his eyes be so dim? If I could but tell him all; for I love him better than my own life!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CABIN AND THE SPY.

A week passed slowly by, a week which every person, Northern or Southern, who was then of mature age will long remember.

It was a week of sad fate. More than a hundred of men had succumbed to the superiority of numbers and surrendered to General Beauregard.

The week was like a match in dry fuel, and its sparks were felt from the eastern boundary of the country to the Pacific. Men began to see that trouble could not be averted, and the seething volcano rocked all the land.

Civil was at hand, and the end no man could see.

During the week, Samuel Carrington had been busy with his head, but he kept for the most part within his own house, and as he looked from the door and saw the broad fields around him, he felt none of the old regret that was the lot of his family.

It was clear there would be no aged mother or father, and no delicate sister to endure its trials.

As for himself, he had no fear. His arm would be his, his heart stouter yet, and he would meet the inevitable bravely.

Alfred Penrock visited him every day. They had long talks, but neither would change his mind. Each believed in his own right, and was fixed in his opinions. Despite this, they always talked in kindness. Old friends and noble by nature, they might differ, but they never quarrel.

Each thought right and did feel as the situation, but the clasp of their strong hands was as warm as ever in the past.

Penrock laid all the blame to the Connecticut college where Sam had been educated. Four years there had wrought in the master chief he believed he saw; but, in time, his friend's eyes might be opened.

Twice, Augusta Warburton rode over with him. Proud and vain, his own people called him, she loved Sam Carrington devotedly, and was bent on saving him, as she regarded it.

He must not be lost to Virginia and the cause she upheld.

One day Sam mounted his black horse and set out in an easterly direction. He had a fixed purpose in view, and was anxious to arrive at his destination, so, as he galloped along at a good pace, he was not aware of his return, and he looked once more the dashing cavalier.

His fine form and face, his long, black and curling hair, his dark eyes and heavy mustache were calculated to attract unusual attention, and a friendly planter nodded as he passed, and then smiled slightly.

He will never do me to any great degree. True, he is no longer the wild young man we called 'Mad Sam,' but I expect to see him on his gallops as long as I live, unless—well, we do not know what this impending war may bring forth. It may give him a grave or a general's commission in the Southern army."

But "Mad Sam" went steadily on until he neared the border of the fertile swamp. It was not a place of good report. Outlaws, white and black, were known to lurk in its depths, defying pursuit, but the swamp was wide, and there was room for other men beside them. There were men who lived honestly, and tracked their game under the silent pines or the bunchy cypresses; and to one of these he was going.

Augusta Warburton had the name of Sam. He sought—no, as he was frequently called, "Ziah of the Swamp." A still hunter by nature and trade, he was an old friend of the rich planter. Dissimilar in all things except in honesty and bravery, there was a strong bond between them.

From the time when Sam was twelve years of age he had been a frequent visitor at Ziah's cabin. In the morning, Ziah was lessons in rifle shooting, in hunting and in trailing.

Together they had slow-tracked many a quarry to its lair. In the low cabin the boy had listened to scores of hunters' "yarns," and under the pines they had walked, eaten and slept side by side.

To this man Sam was now going, and when the warden of the place where he was dismounted, secured his horse to a sapling; and, taking his rifle, went on alone. Over knoll and hollow, across the refuse of the pine and cypress, his places were only the fallen trees and occasional hummocks saved him from the treacherous mud—by this course he went to the hunter's cabin.

A last he reached a higher, dryer region. Pines became the only trees, and he was to one who loves silence and solitude there is no place more agreeable.

The soft carpet of refuse under foot, the straight, smooth trunks, and the thick, interlaced tops of the trees—it is as though one was in a labyrinth of variegated velvets.

At last the planter paused, for he had come upon an interesting picture.

Between two great trees nestled a little cabin some twelve feet square, and humbly made of pine branches, poles and mud. Before the cabin stood a single man, its owner, "Ziah of the Swamp."

He was fifty years of age, tall and thin, even to a degree painful to behold, but one glance at his face, and his clear eyes, his muscular form would show that it was from nature, not disease. He was not a handsome man. On the contrary, he was homely, with his thin face, high cheek-bones, huge nose and wide mouth, and the square beard on his face only served to add a ragged look to the whole.

Yet, the face was full of honesty, good humor, frankness and firmness. The clear eyes were overhung by huge tufts of hair growing from the brows, but behind the curtain thus made they beamed with candor, though not without a gleam at the square beard.

One minute Sam looked, a smile on his face, and then strode forward. Little sound his feet made on the fragments of pine, yet the hunter looked up quickly.

"Hallo, Ziah!" the visitor genially said.

Then up sprang the man of rifle and trap.

"Sam, you rascal, you're be'n still tracin' me!" he cried. "EE's gettin' ter be a common thing for men ter prow around my

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## CHAPTER IV.

## 'ZIAH FREES HIS MIND.

cabin. Some day I'll get eloped with like a peoty girl. Lord! wouldn't I make a bloomin' bride!"

They shook hands warmly, and a comical smile played around the ragged face of the hunter.

"I reckon you could show sharp nails if it came to that," laughed Carrington.

"I should faint. Women always do. Had a piece day, and I was married on her marriage day, and went from one catechism tier another right through. When the minute came further he to be spliced, they tied her to a tree an' hung a weight on her under jaw fer to make her mouth shut. You say 'Yes, 'Gittin' married is serious business, you know, Sam."

"I should say so—in your family."

"That is a current one, 'mongst us. My brother had two different gals propose ter him afore he would consent. After he he said he'd have Maria Stubbs, I felt that the family honor was at stake; he must keep the contract or leave the business. I was afeared him might an' day, an' when he finally tried to run off, I had him 'rested for stealin' my rifle. It took fourteen men ter capture him, and he frothed at the mouth for a week. I was so roughed up that he took the ague, an' shook off his weddin' clothes as fast as we put them on. We carried him ter the altar wrapped round an' round with ropes, an' when we got ther found that the wide elect had eloped with another man. She left a note-of-hand, sayin' she hoped Seth would forgive her; an' he did it, too, easy. Lord, you oughter see him gain first, an' then."

Carrington waited patiently for 'Ziah to talk himself out of breath, answered by a few appropriate remarks, and then added:

"How goes matters in the swamp?"

"Boaty fair, fur the kind."

"You intimated that some one had been prowling around your cabin. Who was it?"

"A two-legged critter 'o' some sort; ain't got his pedigree. He nosed 'round me last night, an' though he found the old man awake, slipped away when I tried ter drop on him. Can't say who 'twas, but I more'n half suspect 'twas your friend, Jake Shelley."

"Why was he here?" asked Sam, frowning.

"Can't say. Mehbe I'll find out one 'o' these days. Why did'n't Warburton send him to prison when you showed up his record? Seoh men are useful only when workin' behind bars."

"Jake is a thorough ruffian, as you say. But 'Ziah, I can't do business. You have, of course, heard the news?"

"The echo has drifted even inter the swamp. Powder has bin burnt an' lead wasted. The old flag has bin shot to tatters, an' the old soldiers are bein' carried; old bayonets are bein' polished an' new ones made. Yas, I've heard the news."

"There is going to be war, 'Ziah."

"I reckon that is, Sam."

"The two men looked fixedly at each other, as free in their ways as in their speech. The swamp man had always called Carrington by his Christian name, as did every one else, and pride and pomp never came between them."

"We spoke of this the other day," continued the planter.

"Have your views changed since then?"

"Not an inch, nor a fraction thereof."

"Then we have stormy times ahead of us. Union men are scarce along the Shenandoah, and mischief may come to the few who do live here."

"Ziah sighed heavily.

"I don't keer in one way; but in another I do. War will drive me from the swamp;—my eye may even fall these ten-paths way. I have enough to do as it is, but I want to turn my back on the pines; but if war comes, why, then, 'Ziah 'o' the Swamp will develop inter 'Ziah 'o' the knapsack an' Union blue."

"The way may not be open for us to join the Unionists."

"Then we'll fight our way; fur to the old flag we must go. Lord! we can't live under any other banner."

"Ziah smote his forehead and spoke with unusual fervor—in fact, with far more emphasis than he would have used had he been aware that, while they talked, a pair of gleaming eyes were watching them from a pine thicket not far away."

And in that cover a man was lying at full length, his rifle by his side and his face full of evil expressions.

As the devil is always near when talked about, so it was with the ambushed man, for he was none other than the ex-overseer Jacob Shelley.

Sam Carrington and his swamp friend talked earnestly for some time. Much was said which they would not wish a third party to hear. With them there was no doubt—they were for the Union, first, last, and always, and when the crisis came they would enroll their names under the folds of the old flag.

While they talked, Jake Shelley listened. He could not hear all they said, but he heard the gist of it, and he was not far from right.

His small and furtive eyes fairly sparkled, and he looked almost feishish in his exultation.

"Revenge shall be mine!" he darkly thought. "In a few days all will be bustle and confusion in the Shenandoah, and when that time comes, every man must join us or fall under the ban. Sam Carrington will not, and then a few of us will launch upon him a power he cannot defy. Aha! rob me of my bread, will you, you accursed bound!"

At the close the fellow desired to shake his fist like a villain in a play, but he knew he was in rather risky company, for him, and he refrained.

'Ziah, however, had used his eyes to good advantage while they talked; and, without saying a word to Sam, he suddenly arose, and with two long bounds launched himself into the pine thicket.

The planter was taken by surprise, but the tremendous crashing which instantly sounded from the bushes, showed that 'Ziah had found some sort of an enemy.

Sam started to his assistance, but at that moment he emerged from the brush, dragging a man after him, a person Sam quickly recognized as Jake Shelley.

The fellow had struggled long enough to convince him that he was no match for the swamp man, and when he was brought out into public, he crouched sullenly on the ground, and made no move.

"Tote you so, Sam," said 'Ziah, placidly. "Sam chuck that snake-rod round his last night, I'll get a piky-one. 'Curious lookin' critter, ain't he? What would you call him? I'm no beauty myself, but I reckon I kin discount Jake Shelley."

The speaker picked up his rifle, and, leaning his weight upon it, looked down on his vagabond captive in a benevolent way.

"What was he doing here?" Sam sharply asked.

"He ain't 'o' course. What else is he good fur? Couldn't make a preacher or a lawyer on him, though 'f his legs were better shaped he might pass for a hedgehog. Yes, he was spyin', an' mighty pokeyness it is, too. Knewed man 'o' who had the same complaint, an' had it bad, too. Kept him stirred up an' excited all the time, so that he lost flesh on the gallop. Where did it end?"

"He had no end," said 'Ziah, "but I reckon if anybody waster be hung, an' put his own neck in the noose. Result, two funerals instead 'o' one. Look out, Jake Shelley, or you'll hit agin' the same snake."

'Ziah shook one finger warningly at the ex-overseer, but Carrington was less at ease. He remembered what they had said, and feared that Shelley had heard too much. He addressed the fellow sharply:

"What are you doing here, sir?"

"Answer yer own question by tellin' how you are hyer," was the rather ambiguous reply.

"I reckon the swamp is free to all. Lookin' at you, are ter me, I come an' go when I see fit, an' it is nobody's business."

"People are liable to make it their business when you play the spy upon them," retorted Carrington.

"I suspect that you followed me here. If so, what was your object?"

"I hev followed nobody," said Shelley, with due prudence. "I walk the swamp, same as 'Ziah does. Ain't et our right? An' ef 'Ziah 'ices in the bushes, can't I look fur a snake, 'bout bein' pounced on by a—"

He paused and looked doubtfully at 'Ziah.

"Speak it out," said the latter, encouragingly.

"I don't think I am wal used," muttered Shelley.

"Maybe a hickory switch would quicken your whole country."

"May be not," quickly answered the prisoner, looking at Sam with evil eyes. "I'm a peace'ble man, but I kin do a little work ef a man gets on the roger."

"No use to talk to him," said 'Ziah, crossly.

"No use ter squeeze a dry sponge. Long an' short out is, the snakekin varmint was spyin' on us. Et's your say what shall be did with him. Shoot, whip, or go free; all one ter me."

'Ziah placidly indulged in a chew of tobacco.

"Of course we must not offer any harm," said Sam, hastily. "He has proved his contemptible nature by playing the spy, but, as he says, the swamp is free to all. Let him go, and the sooner he's better."

"That settles it. Only take yourself off, Jake, an' we'll be happy. But miud you, I don't want you sneakin' round my cabin; call open if you come at night, an' if you set traps in pine thickets an' dig pits in the open. Look out fur them, Jake."

"Don't worry about me," was the surly answer.

"Worry? Lord! I wouldn't worry of you was you'd go down in a bog. Should consider et a benefit ter the country. You see, Jake, I don't like you nor your way. Your face ain't open or manly, no more nor your war is. Should say you were born for the halter."

"Go slow, you lank, lantern-jawed fool," Shelley cried, in sudden fury.

"Slow et is; slow an' easy, this time, but don't come again. Keep your distance, an' let it be long one. Do see you good?"

'Ziah's voice was growing ominous, and the ex-overseer did not care to make further words with him. He knew both men and their moods, though full of anger and spite, did not care to tempt them further. He glanced blackly from one to the other and then promptly strode away through the pines.

"That goes a pison snake," commented the hunter. "Seoh varmintas as he ain't safe nowhar. Can't be trusted by foe or friend."

"Do you suppose he heard me talking?" Sam asked.

"I reckon he did."

"What will he do about it?"

"Mehbe little, mehbe much. He has the will ter ruin us."

"He hates me because I unmasked him to Warburton and he thereby lost his situation, and it is plain he has no love for you. But, 'Ziah, we are liable to soon have a fight hotter than any around our cabin. If we stand firm for the Union, even our old neighbors and friends will turn against us, for war arouses all of men's evil passions. It would suit Jake Shelley well to lead the attack."

"Let him do et ef he dar's," said 'Ziah, impressively. "Ef I see a pison snake nigh my cabin I crush out its life. Two-legged snake though Jake is, he don't want to tempt me too far. The Strouts are a peace'ble family, but when their mad is up they are dangerous. Ef I set down on Jake he will think something has happened."

"That is all well enough, but the fact remains that we are in a divided minority. Nearly all of Virginia is going to secede if it comes to that. We may yet have to flee fast and far for our lives."

"I don't see how," Sam; I reckon we will," was the gloomy answer. "Things look mighty dubious just now."

Satisfied that Shelley had taken himself well out of sight and hearing, Sam remained in the swamp friend for an hour longer. They had much to say, but they spoke mostly of the future. It fairly bristled with doubts and perils. Perhaps death lurked out far away, and the end of the world was at hand. The grand old pines it was hard to think that Virginia's soil might soon be the battle-ground for hostile armies. Truly, they had cause to feel gloomy.

From the day when the first gun was fired on Fort Sumter, the work of separation progressed as fast as was possible, but there was much to yet be done, and, confining ourselves to the history of Virginia, it was not until the twenty-fourth of April that any decisive step was taken.

After the meeting had been held which practically settled the question, but when, on the date before given the vice-president, elect of the new departure met the leading men of the Old Dominion at Richmond, the course took a long step forward. Measures were taken to submit to the people a proposition to join the Southern Confederacy, the question to be settled in the polls, and again the whole country thrilled.

Ample time was given the people to reflect; ample time to persuade the wavering when they could be persuaded. Many there were who had been wavering when the question came, and on the sixteenth of May one of the Virginia senators came to the front by declaring that those who could not vote to separate Virginia from the Union "must leave the state."

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ruffianly gang, who had expected to have the charge all to themselves, was amazed when the pair dashed forward and met him half way.

Ziah's long rifle swept around his head and rattled the opposing pieces against each other; and then Sam sprung into the gap, and his sword began to play, ably seconded by the hunter's favorite weapon.

Sam had taken his first lesson in swordsmanship when only ten years of age. He had followed it up all through his youth, and, when in Paris, had so perfected his skill that a superior did not exist in the Old Dominion.

The rioters learned this fact, to their cost. The supple blade mowed a red swath before it, glided under their clumsy guards, lunging here and there, and making a glittering wall of steel which seemed like a solid wall.

Nor was Ziah less effective. His great strength enabled him to use his rifle as though it had been a reed, and where it fell, broken heads were likely to be found soon after.

His opponents knew him well; they too, were men of the swamp, the gun, and the trap, but not one could stand alone before Amaziab Strout.

After it looked as though the whole gang were about to hold their ground,

Jake Shelley fumed and spat, but he was shrewd enough to keep in the rear, and though anxiously sought by the defenders, he was not within reach.

It was the old story of individual prowess and bravery against the press of numbers, and, suddenly, the rioters broke and fled, Shelley falling down the steps in his anxiety to avoid the war, but quickly recovering himself, and showing a remarkable celerity in retreat.

"Now's our time; *git!*" the hunter vigorously said.

Sam needed no urging. He caught up a rifle dropped by a dead man, tore off his powder-flask and bullet-pouch, and then the two brave men ran down the steps, turned sharply to the right, and started for the nearest wood.

They were not at once followed, for the Shelley gang were running fast and far in their alarm, and the fugitives had covered a hundred yards before the fact was perceived by the enemy.

"We will beat them now, sure as sin," Strout said, in a tone of exultation.

But Sam needed no reply. He was looking back at the old home, the house where he was born, and the sight was one to fill him with sorrow and bitterness. Wrapped entirely in flames, it made a red beacon of terrible import, and showed that speedy ruin was at hand.

And the negro quarters, too, were fiercely blazing, making it evident that not a roof would remain for the touch of the morning sun.

Horrible indeed was the sight to the young planter, but he set his teeth and followed Ziah in silence.

Not far had they gone when a chorus of yells in the rear showed that the rioters had discovered their flight, and were recovering the wailing courage. They showed their rage and enmity, and started in rapid pursuit; but the hunter smiled grimly. He had no fear, unless horses were brought into use. A clear mind and a strong arm were the swamp for which they were hunting, but it was familiar ground to both, and they ran rapidly, keeping the lead they had at first obtained.

"You see, Sam, it has come just as I prophesied," said the hunter, anon.

"I see," Carrington feverishly answered. "You are burned out of house and home; an' your only hopes ter keep this place until you reach Wasington."

"I will appeal to the authorities."

"Et will do no good. The time is at hand when the seeders will need ev'ry fightin' man in Virginia, an' Jake Shelley an' his gang count as fast as anybody else. They won't do them harm, but this thing will be smoothed over, an' the gang taken into the fold, sure as sin."

Sam did not answer, for he knew that Ziah spoke truly. War is war, the world over; and he could not expect to have any sentiment wasted on him since he had decided to go against the majority of Virginians. Lawless and unauthorized as the attack had been, his only way was to abide by it, and hasten to the protection of the old flag.

That he would gain that shelter was by no means certain, for in the rear came the rioters like bloodhounds. Once in the swamp,

they might be evaded for the night; but what of the day, or days, to follow?

At that very moment, when all were gone from the scene of the conflagration, except the terror-stricken negroes, two horsemen dashed to the burning mansion. One was Alfred Penrock, the other a middle-aged planter, and a groan broke from Alfred's lips.

"Merciful Heaven!" he exclaimed, "I never thought to see such a scene on the soil of Virginia. Those brutal wretches have done more to-night to blacken the fair fame of the new confederation than all time can wash out."

Then he turned fiercely to the slaves to inquire after Sam.

Before he had learned anything, the fugitives were in the swamp. The spreading trees seemed to stretch out their arms in welcome, and they went to familiar ground. The pursuers would find it hard to run them down on such soil.

"Sam," he said, breaking another silence, "there is only one way open to us. We had better send North as fast as we can go. It's all well enough to be brave an' defiant; but we can't afford ter suicide jest yet. We must do so."

"Push straight ahead," said Carrington, impatiently, as he nearly fell over a hummock. "All we leave in Virginia is lost to us; we can only go on, and trust to the future to give us a chance for revenge."

"Jake Shelley is goin' to chase us smart, sure as sin."

"Let him chase. I'll put a bullet in his head if he comes too near."

Sam released into silence, but he was scarcely at his ease. The pursuers knew the way as well as they, and seemed likely to make it hot for them before the chase was over. Proper action would out of their retreat beyond the swamp, though he hoped Shelley lacked the brain to secure any such advantage.

Five miles of swamp lay ahead of them, and the first of these was covered without mishap.

The pursuers did not seem to gain, and though Sam and Ziah now and then stumbled over hummocks or splashed into dark pools of water, they here it philosophically.

Their troubles were but just begun, however.

Aton, on the night-air, came a long, thin, low sound, which was like a wall, and the hunter started violently. The sound was from their rear, and he had heard it before that night too often to mistake its character. Again the note arose, low-drawn, quivering, and doleful, and he nervously grasped Sam's arm.

"Did you hear that?" he demanded.

"What was it?"

"The cry of a bloodhound!"

"I thought as much."

"Do you know what it means?" demanded Ziah, a little impatiently, for Sam seemed too cool for the occasion.

"I reckon Jake Shelley is hunting us with dogs."

"He is, sure as sin, an' I s'pose you know what that means. You're know'n of runaway niggers bein' hunted that way, an' you know what usually becomes on 'em."

"We are marked out far the same fate."

"Let 'em mark!" retorted Sam. "We are well armed, and if the worst comes, we will show 'em Virginia blood."

"God be with you, but that's the way ter talk et, an' I reckon the dogs don't f'ar our flesh."

They spoke bravely, but, really, both were scared and uneasy. It was enough if they were to have men on their track through flood, but the addition of the hounds made the situation desperate indeed.

Although much of the land was low, there were here and there a few simple impossibility to throw the keen-scented creatures off the track.

Another mile was soon passed, but the threatening danger had grown more threatening. However, straight to the rioters, the bloodhounds were gaining. Nearer and nearer yet sounded their tremulous notes, and it almost seemed as though an accent of death was creeping in. They were gaining, and if the work went on they must be fought.

The fugitives were beginning to feel the effects of the three mile run, coupled as it was with the danger of the swamp and the fallen trees, and Ziah suddenly slackened his pace.

"Sam," he said, "we've got ter fight them hounds."

"I reckon we have, Ziah."

"Then let us do it now, afore our muskies is gone. Ev'ry minute o' this skeddaddle is tellin' on us, an' ef we fight bloodhounds we need all our capacity. Sides, when they are on 'em, the blame skunks who own them may be throw'n off the trail."

"Fight them where you will; I am ready," was the terse reply.

The hounds had been gaining rapidly. No matter what his own against them, and they had a way of getting through the swampy lowlands that was as remarkable as it was dangerous to the quarry, whether man or beast.

When the creature on the trail, one sees a long, slender body shooting ahead, over a log here, and under one there, through a bunch of bushes like a flash of light, neatly leaping from log to hummock—never pausing, seldom tiring, sure as death, and usually working for death.

Such is a bloodhound on the trail.

Sam and Ziah crossed a little pine knoll at a run, but the hounds pushed at the further side. They bore another log, another land, and ending the descent was a line of bushes, and one word from Ziah was enough to make both men drop panting to the ground.

"Git your knife ready," said the hunter. "Don't use anything else ef you kin help it, fur we don't want any noise. Hal they are almost hyer—stand firm, Sam, stand firm!"

#### CHAPTER VIII. THE RESULT.

The hunter uttered the direction from habit, not because it was necessary, and then the two brave men knelt in the edge of the bushes; and, with their knives ready, awaited the shock.

Suddenly the wailing howls sounded with startling clearness. The hounds had gained the top of the knoll, and their cries seemed intensified in power and vindictiveness. Their number was as yet uncertain, though they were far too many for comfort, but the ambushers did not wait.

Down the slope leaped the hounds, their yellowish bodies distinct enough in the darkness. Five were already visible, and more were seen in the rear.

Straight on they dashed, and then the bushes parted before their eager fronts. Two of them went straight into trouble. Sam and Ziah had each seized a victim, grasping the muscular throat with their left hand; and, at the same time, driving home the knives.

Men of less ability might have failed in the work; they probably would. But not so with Ziah and the Swamp and his pupil. Through the yielding flesh and muscles went the steel, and then followed convulsive springs, a few half-drawn walls, inaudible a hundred feet away, and two of the brutes were off the track forever.

It was not done too soon. The three remaining hounds had discovered the state of affairs and stayed their rush. Their eyes gleamed ominously in the darkness, and their open mouths were emitting hot breath. They were pausing to avenge their comrades' death and to tear the throats of the ambushers as they had before then torn those of the fugitives.

Sam Carrington settled coolly back to await a fresh foe; but Ziah, remembering the odds were against them, sprang forward and met a tawny brute half way.

He had a fair chance, for the little by one strong thrust, but his foot caught on a bush, and he fell directly under the dog.

The mishap did not alarm him. His left hand came up and covered the bloody nose; just before the jaws could fasten on his own throat, and then began a desperate struggle. He had retained his knife, but the rapid evolutions of the dog prevented him from reaching it. He was not to be so easily animal proved so strong that he could hardly retain his hold.

It was a grip for life or death. While he retained it the long fangs could not rend his flesh; if he lost the fight might soon be decided against him.

Sam was more fortunate. He had at the first inflicted a severe wound; and, after rolling about for a moment, he managed to add another and decisive one. He threw off the still quivering body and turned to give his aid to Ziah.

The hunter and his enemy were spinning about, and the latter, as Sam looked in vain for a chance to get in a blow.

Before this could be accomplished, the elder man suddenly cast aside another carcass, and arose with his knife dipped in blood.



"What's the fifth dog?" he coolly demanded.

"Step dis way, Massa 'Ziah, an' you kin see him."

The voice sounded from the darkness, and Sam started. Unless his ears deceived him, it was that of Cleon, the black boy who had been with him since the first day.

"Who in sin be you?" the hunter demanded, in surprise.

"Golly! Reckon you uns know me. Jes' you step dis way, an' you'll see me s-ottin' on him."

The men strode forward, and saw Cleon coolly seated on the body of the fifth dog. His hands were crossed unconcernedly around his knees, and he looked the very picture of contentment.

"Lord—lord!" said 'Ziah, in amazement. "How did you get hyer, you young lunatic, an' how did you kill the dorg?"

Cleon held up his gory knife.

"Waal, I'm blowed!" muttered Strout; but Sam was more concerned.

"Why are you here, Cleon?" he asked.

The boy rose suddenly, and faced them with an earnestness new to him.

"Why am I here?" he repeated. "I'll tell you, Massa Sam. 'Cause I hab bruck out fur my dependin' on de day hab come when dar is a light in de Norf, an' dat way I am goin'."

De oberseer's whip shall crack no more 'round my back, an' I will be free or no. More dat, I am goin' wid you, Don't say a word, Massa Sam, fur it will do no good. De chains am broken, an' I am goin' to de land on freedom. Don't try to send me to Massa Warburton, for my face is Norf—always Norf."

Boy though he was and black of skin, there was an earnestness and pathos in his manner which deeply impressed his hearers. The latter added a "Hurrah" in a subdued manner, as he closed, and even Carrington was staggered. Still he did not want it said that he had enticed away another man's slave.

He made a few weak objections, but Cleon was not to be moved. He had run away, and if they would not permit him to go in their company he would go alone.

"We are goin' headlong across de Potomac, we kin git tar, an' you hev every ter feller."

"I looked wistfully at the plauter.

"So be it, my boy," Sam kindly said, giving his hand. "I only hope you may regret it."

"S'it!"

The warning came from the hunter, and he suddenly dropped on the ground. Sam and Cleon followed his example, and then all saw a man rushing down the slope. The pause had enabled the pursuer, who was the owner of the hound, and a very swift runner, to reach the spot.

'Ziah's fighting blood was up, but the man pointed on their right and only a rifle ball could have stopped him; he lay quietly as he ran for two rods, and then came a deep splash as he plunged into the edge of a lagoon or pool of some sort.

He smiled grimly as he heard the man cursing, but his wrath abruptly changed to terror from some cause, and he began to scream loudly.

Then the wail cried died away, and the tri-angler, that whatever had occurred to the unfortunate wretch, his career was over.

They had neither the will nor the time to investigate. The remaining pursuers must be kept at hand and delay would be fatal. So they arose, made a slight *detour* to avoid the water and went on at a run.

In half an hour," said 'Ziah, "we will be clear of de swamp, an' den you know whar we can get hoses an' go on like wild fire. We must put many a mile between us an' this place afore mornin'." We must desert old Virginy fur good until we come back as conquerors."

"I care very little whether I ever come back," said Sam, gloomily. "I can see only darkness and ruin for our fair state; and the part of a conqueror would scarcely be a pleasant one."

"Still, I hanker like sin ter conquer Jake Shelley an' his gang. But let me get my grip on them an' you'll hear the dry bones rattle 'em to bits!"

"They shall take de debt to the uttermost," said Sam, with subdued passion. My heart is tender toward Virginia, but these ruffians shall be punished I live. Ay, I must return at some day, I return for vengeance on them and to see Alfred Pennock, Augusta and—and Vida. Bless the child! she thought of me when I was in peril and sent me warning, nor shall I forget it. I will come back."

It was a confident speech; considering what dangers lay between him and the future he was seeking. Virginia was ablaze with sectional excitement and no love was wasted on Unionists. When they crossed the Potomac they would be safe, but not before.

No further sound was heard from the pursuers. The swamp was traversed and left behind; horses were then obtained and their flight continued. Such few people as were around at the small hours of the morning looked in surprise at the three galloping riders, but no one opposed their going.

In fact, they went on to the Northern limit, and there found the society they craved in the national crisis. Having cast their lot for the old flag, their place was among the men who were to fight under its folds.

Sam and Cleon were not long in locating themselves. The former enlisted in a Connecticut regiment, in which were several of his old college friends, making no attempt to secure an office. He was willing to commence at the foot of the ladder, and so the name of Private Samuel C. Carrington went on the muster-roll. How long it would stay there was uncertain, for the men had enlisted for only three months.

Cleon, taking the name of Edmund Smith, was "adopted," as he expressed it, by an officer as his servant; but 'Ziah Strout would not enlist. He had all the color of a scout, and knew Virginia well, and he was ready to act as guide or spy, if so desired, if not, to fight on his own hook.

And so the trio settled down to await what might follow, and during the long days which were passed in inactivity no word came to Sam Carrington from the Shenandoah.

He had said that he would some day go back to the old home, but he little knew how long a time was to elapse before he would keep his word.

The men who followed the fortunes of the army of the Potomac during the first year of its existence, did not see many famous engagements. The ex-plantier received his "baptism of fire" at Bull Run, and then, for a long period, inactivity so well remembered by men who had expected much of the Northern army.

Despite this, Sam Carrington crept slowly up the ranks, and it was in a captain's uniform that he went with McClellan's army, in its midsummer march of 1862.

The Northern papers had substituted the timeworn headline of "All quiet on the Potomac" for "On to Richmond," but the time had not yet come for the victors to tread the streets of the Southern city.

At the battle of Malvern Hills, Captain Carrington's military career suffered a severe check.

He was severely wounded in the leg by a rifle ball, carried North, and ultimately discharged from service as one crippled beyond redemption.

For some months he went about on crutches, and then came a brilliant idea.

When in Paris, three years before, he had become intimately acquainted with a French surgeon, reputed to be the best in the country.

Across the ocean to him went the ex-plantier, and under his care the injured limb so improved, that in July, 1865, Carrington set his face toward his native land, as sound and well as on the day when he fled from Shelley's outlaws.

## CHAPTER VII.

### IN THE FIELD.

During his residence in Paris, Sam had heard very little from such of his old acquaintances as have figured in the preceding chapters. That little was nothing more than cold newspaper news, of the kind befitted Colonel Pennock, by which he knew that his old friend was still alive, and winning military glory.

Misses Warburton, 'Ziah Strout, and Cleon alias Edmund Smith, and Jake Shelley he knew absolutely nothing.

Since he had been crippled, Sam had been his own master, and appointed man. He saw his loved country in danger, and he was in condition to give his aid. War might surge to the very door of the White House, and contending armies fight in the halls of congress.

With his recovery came a revulsion of feeling, and by the time he landed in New York he was once more the gay and brilliant Sam of the old days; he was going into battle again, and the thought brought so much of

exultation that he laughed and joked when others were grave.

Landing at New York the middle of April, he at once hastened to Washington, anxious for active service. He had but equal of fighting on foot, and, through the aid of friends who had not forgotten his services with the cavalry force of the Potomac, he was attached to the cavalry force of General W. W. Averill, once more starting as a private.

He had found a congenial field at last. A fine horseman, he had all the qualities that go to make the true cavalry rider, and he at once entered on the new life with zest. His first service was when Averill moved to destroy the lead mines of Wytheville, early in May, and from that time he followed the fortunes of that commander wherever he went.

His bravery, prompt obedience of orders and dashing ways soon attracted the attention of his superior officers, and once more he began to see promotions come to his hand, so that, on the first day of August, he was once more enabled to sign his name Captain Samuel Carrington.

During his three months with the cavalry, he had several times heard men mention one Amaziah Strout, a famous scout, spy and guide; and their paths, so long divided, had not yet converged.

Matters had not been progressing very favorably in the Shenandoah Valley for the Union cause. There had been engagements which sometimes resulted in victory, and as often in defeat, and Lieutenant-General Grant saw the need of a better organization at that point. Maryland and Pennsylvania required protection from invasion, to say nothing of the demands of the Government; so, after some delay, several minor departments were consolidated in one, and, on the seventh of August, General Sheridan was given command.

The six weeks which followed gave considerable active service to the cavalry, but, before making a bold push forward, Sheridan had to thoroughly organize his army, and secure the means to attempt the plans formed by his active mind.

With each dash, Sam Carrington gained fresh laurels. He was always quick to obey, and, since his promotion to the rank of captain, he had shown a skill in executing orders which did not pass unnoticed. All these things, combined with his splendid horsemanship, finally gained for him a sobriquet by which he was ever after known.

A handful of men were needed for a scout, and Sheridan had turned to Averill, and lightly said, "You may send Cavalry Sam," and from that hour the ex-plantier had a name which stuck to him like a burr.

One day, near the last of August, General Averill, while making a tour of the camp, came to the person, and, after greeting him, abruptly said:

"I desire you to take fifty men, captain, and go on a scout toward Bostwick's wood. A scout his just come in and reported that there are a number of suspicious characters hanging about there, and though they wear no uniform, I suspect they are trying to learn too much. Look them up and deal with them as you see proper, directly, but try to bring in at least one prisoner. I'll send the scout to you at once."

Sam answered cheerfully; and, while the general walked aw, prepared for the expedition.

He was still busy when a peculiar voice sounded behind him.

"What's the slathers that goes out under my wing? I'd like ter measure 'em afore we start, fur we may wrap 'em right like sin."

The voice was very familiar to Cavalry Sam, and he wheeled quickly, an eager look on his face. His eyes had not deceived him, before him, looking exactly as he did three years before, stood Amaziah Strout, with his long arms wrapped around his rifle.

"'Ziah!" exclaimed the young officer, and he strode forward with outstretched hand. But the man who wrapped his arms closer around his rifle and stood resolutely.

"Don't ye do it, Cap'n Carrington—don't ye do it," he said, in a subdued voice. "The slathers is in de wood."

"What of that?" demanded Sam, greatly astonished at having his hand refused.

"Why, cap'n, don't ye see? We ain't boys no longer, an' 'dis ain't the Shenandoah swamp. 'Tis de land of de Union, an' de cap'n's slathers an' I'm yee too faithful der. Don't let the slathers see yee too familiar with sech!"

Sam burst into a ringing laugh, and then

ture 'Ziah's arms loose, and grappled with his right hand, with his left violently.

"Why you old rascal," he said, regardless of the stares of the men, "who has been putting folly into your wise head? Too much war has petrified your heart, but you can give me the cold shoulder. You and I have been on too many a trail to put on airs now."

The scout looked around in horror. To his military mind, Sam was committing an irreparable breach of decorum by not kneeling him too well of old to oppose his will any further.

Questions were excitedly asked and answered for a few minutes, and then, when they did not know of each other from hearsay, began to gain form. Full explanations must be reserved for a future time, but Sam was pleased to hear that 'Ziah would follow the fortunes of Sheridan's army as a while.

"But I ain't bound ter nothing," the scout emphatically said. "I'm a free-booter, or, in other words, I fight on my own hook. I'll never enter me about, but, at request, I always put my shoulder to the wheel and the old flag. I like Sheridan, an' hyer's as expects his slashers will get it like sin in the Sheuandah."

By this time all was ready for the scout, and the men mounted, and rode off with Carrington and Strout at their head. As they went, the latter gave Sam a good deal of information concerning old acquaintances, and a few items may be given here.

Augusta and Vida Warburton were at the old home in the valley, but their father had long since succumbed to old age, and closed his earthly career. Augusta was as devoted to her father as the cause of the Confederacy, and she had done much for their armies from time to time, but the younger sister had no sympathy for the seceders.

After the Peace, she was with General Early, and Sam had heard of him too often in public way to need 'Ziah's assurance that he was one of the best regimental leaders that the war had produced.

Having gained an outline of all these matters, Sam turned his attention more closely to the work before him. He had a five mile ride to reach Botswick's wood, but the distance was soon covered by the riders in blue, and the suspicious locality was also moving.

The place was not a pleasant one to explore. Five miles long by three wide, it was in all parts dark and tangled, while near the center was a swamp covering two or three acres, which made the treacherous footing even for a man of light weight.

The bluecoats were well placed at the outlook. Cavalrymen by nature and education, they preferred to fight in the open field rather than in a chapter, but they kept the peace as they rode, and were ready to support Carrington to the death, if need be.

Having reached the edge, Sam spread out his arms and line, while 'Ziah in advance as a scout, and the decisive advance was begun. The way, as has been said, was tangled. Small bushes grew plentifully among the larger trees, and the bluecoats were obliged to keep their eyes here and there without much regard for order.

Spread out though they were, the presence of the scout in advance guarded them from danger of an ambush. He covered ten feet to one on either side, and the bluecoats, horsemen, and, gliding rapidly from side to side, looked into every suspicious place before they entered.

Certain signals, often used by him and Sam in the old days, had been agreed upon before starting, and when the order was suddenly passed along the line for the command to halt, they knew something had been seen to their right, though, to them, the plaintive bird-call from ahead had no particular meaning.

Cavalry Sam was better versed in 'Ziah's ways. The bird-call had come from the scout's throat, and he knew that Sam had given the order and the advance ceased. Then came another signal, and the officer spoke to the second in command, gave his rein to a private, dismounted, and glided through the bushes.

He found 'Ziah at the base of a ridge, calmly waiting for him to join him.

"Well?" questioned Carrington.

"I'm over ther ridge."

Sam looked, but at first, saw nothing. Then, to his keen sight, came a new discovery.

"Is it smoke?" he asked.

"Sure as sin," Sam said, "an' I forgot what I learned ye. Yas, there is smoke thar, an' I opine it comes from a fire. Stay hyer, cap'n, an' I'll go an' see."

"I will go, too. Move to the left, and I

will take the right. Afterward, if not too reckless, meet at the center."

'Ziah did not remonstrate. "Mad Sam" of the old days, had been his pupil; Captain Carrington was his superior officer.

They separated, and with the caution of Indians, crept toward the base of the ridge. Beyond the crest, they could still see the smoke curling upward among the tree tops, and they had no doubt but that some sort of a camp was there.

#### CHAPTER IX. BUSHWHACKERS.

Sam felt his blood thrill as he crept along through the bushes. His many expeditions with 'Ziah in the past had been the result of an inborn love of the wood and its ways; and though the wild boy had become an energetic man, the old feeling was still there.

Having reached the top of the ridge, he looked over and again saw the smoke, but, though it was more distinct and plainly located, the trees and bushes at its source put him on his guard.

He surveyed the whole locality with hawk-like keenness, and then crept down the southern slope. It was not very dignified work for an army officer, but he was so situated just now that he could disregard form and ceremony, and he went on with real pleasure.

Gliding from rock to rock and through the knots, he soon gained a view of the spot from which the smoke was arising. Huge pine trees arose thickly on the ridge, and in a group of those, Sam, peering out from a thicket, saw the campers.

Through the trees were a few picturesque, and the more of brawny fellows who lay around on the soft droppings from the tree-tops were certainly well enough of look to match with their surroundings. Some were in blue uniforms, and they, blue or gray, but men in garments of varied colors, ragged and soiled by mud, some without sleeves and others decapitated at the bottom until they were merely jackets; all rough, ragged, and unkempt. Nor were they any the less better. Men gaunt and ill shaped of form, with unkempt hair and beard.

Sam had seen such men before. They are to be found everywhere. Go where one may, and one will find them. There were such in Virginia in 1861; there were more in 1864, for the iron band of war had been there. Sam had seen such men in the old days, and knew them as "poor whites" and, once, he had seen men very much like them come to his house by night with torch and rifle.

How vividly that night of terror came back to him!

He looked closely at the campers, and then suddenly started. Did he see a ghost, or was the ragged man by the tree the same who had led on the rioters to murder him? But he was not a statue; he was a man, and before him, and not much survey was needed to mark him as the leader of the band.

"A 'bushwhacker,'" commented Sam, aloud. "A pretty gang of ruffians, or their looks and leadership go for nothing. Ah! Jake Shelley, I think I see revenge in store for me. You are the only man in Virginia I want to injure; but, by my life, I'll be even with you one day, and my bloodhounds shall be human ones."

The best of men sometimes make mistakes, and as often are taken off their guard. While Sam was thus, he did not see that a dark form was approaching him from the rear. The next he suspected that one of Shelley's scouts, coming in hastily to apprise the band of the approach of the Unionists, had seen the platoon in blue crawling through the bushes.

Nevertheless, the bushwhacker scout had seen all this, and in his anxiety to capture the spy he had forgotten the more important duty which he wanted the glory of taking Sam alone.

Thickly covered as was the ground by the droppings from the pines, not a sound betrayed his advance. He crept on, nearer and still nearer, until at last, at the white weight dropped on the captain's back.

Taken wholly by surprise, Sam did not lose his presence of mind. A heavy weight was laid on his hips, and heavy hands were on his shoulders, and he knew that he was in business he could not be "turned."

So the captain, without a movement that might have been expected, flung his hands and head about and caught at the bushwhacker's garments. By chance he secured a good hold, and then the man, who had

thought to fight at an advantage, found himself drawn down and gripped tightly by the throat.

He was strong, being larger of frame than Sam; but he soon found he had saddled a restive horse. One resistless squirm and the captain had turned himself. A slight shifting of his feet, and he had the bushwhacker on equal terms.

The latter felt the strength of his long arms, and became desirous of shouting for help, but he grip on his throat shut off utterance as he tried to utter, and so short time it would strangle him unless he worked himself free.

A desperate struggle began, but it was far less successful than might have been expected. Sam had wound him round like a snake, and like an anaconda, and if the latter had been in a joking mood, he might have compared his situation to that of a man in the hug of a grizzly.

Carrington's tremendous muscle had its way. He planted the bushwhacker on his back, gained his own knees, and assumed a most ferocious scowl as he looked down on his victim.

"One word," he hissed, and I'll cut your throat. Do you hear me?"

The man did hear, but could not answer. He was already growing purple in the face from the terrible grip on his neck, and his frantic but unsystematic struggles showed Sam as much.

"I am going to let on your breath again," he slowly said, "but I swear that one word of alarm seals your fate. Hear me, and take warning."

He released his hold, and still watching his captive, proceeded to use the man's knife on a stick with such dexterity that he soon had a gag finished.

By that time the prisoner was breathing more naturally, and the terror expressed in his face had given place to fierce rage; but he dared not utter a word.

He had learned the mettle of his enemy to his sorrow.

Sam fitted the gag into his mouth, and looked about for material to use for binding.

At first he seemed destined to fail in this, but luck favored him. The bushwhacker, having no suspenders, had a cord ingeniously wound around his waist to sustain his lower garments, and the captain promptly appropriated the limited securing.

"Now," he quietly said, "all you have to do is keep where you are for a few minutes. Business obliges me to take my departure, but I'll leave you in good condition."

As Sam spoke the last word, he heard voices behind him on the slope, and, wheeling, he peered through the bushes.

Down the descent, a score of men were coming, and he saw that they were his, but coming to the top, he saw that their appearance did not afford him pleasure.

Plainly, they were of Jake Shelley's own kind, rough-and-ready bushwhackers; and their arrival placed him between two fires, as it were.

He crouched lower in the bushes, his weapons ready for use, and awaited with some anxiety.

Discovery meant trouble of the worst kind, perhaps death, but he was resolved to fight it out, if need be.

A peaceful surrender would only give a tame victory to the bushwhackers and do him no good.

He reached for his bluecoats then, but it would be madness to signal. As though in answer to his thoughts, a bird-call just then sounded from the northern slope, and he knew 'Ziah had finished his survey, and gone to the place of meeting; but he dared not answer.

The new-comers made considerable noise, and the first lot soon aroused.

Jake Shelley pushed to the front and gave a challenge, but, immediately after, he seemed to recognize the leader of strangers, for the two men stepped forward and shook hands cordially.

Kindred spirits had met, but their rage depicted the loss of all claims to the dignity of chieftainship.

They were standing near Sam, and he heard all that they said. Questions were mutual, asked and answered, and the new-comers were of a roving band, and their leader seemed to be named Bragdon. Evidently, he and Shelley were birds of common plumage, for he was seen cordially inviting to camp with the first party.

The bushwhackers needed only the word. They then flung themselves down in their



tracks, produced their pipes, and began to smoke vigorously.

Doubtless there was a touch of the picturesque about the double camp, but all this was lost on Captain Sam, of Cragmont. By the formation of the new wing, he was placed in the very heart of the dual force, and only concealed from their view by a thin curtain of bushes.

His situation was serious, and he realized it fully.

If his prisoner should manage to give the alarm, or if one of the bushwhackers should find his nose inside the pocket, discovery would surely follow, and two score of such rough troopers would make short work of an officer in Union blue.

He and his eyes on the prisoner, "Johnny," he said, with surprising lightness, "observe this knife. It was once your own, and you know its temper. Well, if you utter so much as a groan, or crackle a stick, the knife ends your life. Understand?"

The man nodded, sullenly. He possessed an average amount of pluck, but he had no desire to buckle and die.

Sam fell to thinking. The bushwhackers had settled listlessly down in their places. Plainly, they did not know aught of the Union cavalrymen, or the bird-calls from beyond the ridge fell heedlessly on their hearing. Quite enough they certainly were, but it was like the sleep of a panther. Once aroused they and they would be merciless, and it would be almost miraculous if some one of them did not soon intrude in the thicket.

As has been said, Sam fell to thinking. He wanted to get out of the trap plainly, but how was it to be done? Clearly, not by stealth, for no such way was open. If he went, it must be openly. How would a dash succeed?

He asked himself the question, and answered it by deciding that it would only serve to make himself a sieve, through the instrumentality of Confederate lead; and he went on such ballast.

Only one idea occurred to him, and though that was a desperate one, he resolved to take one step in executing it.

So he quietly released his prisoner of his coarse, lowly garment, and slipped them on over his own uniform. This was not difficult, for, as we previously stated, the man was larger of frame than he, and though it looked like Confederate rather than a sturdy state of attire, it was according to the old saying, that "all is fair in war."

Next, Sam plunged his hands into a spot of earth, which was dampened from a spring above, and proceeded to spread a little mud over his face, after which he disarranged his hair to the best of his ability.

The work had been scientifically done, and when he had added the prisoner's uniform, he looked like quite a passable desperado. Just what he was to do next he had no idea, but at that moment he was startled by seeing one of the bushwhackers entering the thicket.

## CHAPTER X.

### SAM AS A BUSHWHACKER.

Brave as Cavalry Sam was, he felt genuine alarm at seeing the Confederate thus advancing. If he saw the captive guard, he would sound an alarm, and the captain was not mad enough to think he could overcome and beat the stout fellow in the heart of the camp without giving his game dead away to the enemy.

Plainly, the intruder must be stopped.

Acting on a sudden idea, the disguised officer pushed forward and met the man don't

"Better hold up, old man, of yer don't want a pesky scratchin'," he said, gruffly. "Them scrub pins tickle like as though they was thorns."

He stood still, rubbing his hands as though they had been injured by the bushes, but looking the man full in the face and resolved to make an attack on him and then a dash for anything wrong was suspected.

A half-mile crossed the man's face and then his own gaze fell to Sam's hands. The latter looked in the same direction and then a sudden perspiration burst from every pore. Then, showing plainly through a compartment in one sleeve, the Union blue of his uniform stared them in the face.

No wonder the captain was alarmed; no wonder he began to blink quickly and savagely to the other's face; but the bushwhacker, with only a careless glance which did not detect the telltale blue, looked care-

lessly up at the dirt-grimed face of his new acquaintance.

He was, himself, one of Bragdon's men, and he supposed Sam belonged with Shelley's band.

"I was er tryin' to find the source o' the water I see," he explained. "My throat is dry as an army cracker."

"You, comrade," said Sam promptly. "Foller me an' I'll show you the way."

"Lead on, old man."

And then, one or two of Bragdon's men saw two persons walk leisurely up the hill, side by side, without a suspicion that anything was wrong. One of the two they knew to be Dick Ford of their own company; the other, of course, belonged with Shelley.

Sam proved a faithful guide and led his man to the spring at once, but there he encountered a fresh danger. Two of Ford's friends, having partaken of the fresh water, were shuffling a pack of greasy cards and grew animated at sight of the new comers.

"Hallo, Dick," one of them said; "you are jest in, but what two more in this gang?"

"Will you jine?"

"Reckon I will, arter I wet my whistle. Be you with us, old man?"

Sam was on the point of pleading pressing business, but quickly changed his mind and agreed to oblige them. So, while Ford drank, he busied himself by pinning up the dangerous rent in his sleeve and the Union blue out of sight for the time being.

Dick Ford drank his fill and the quartet sat down to play, depositing their arms in a pile near at hand. It seemed as though Cavalry Sam was playing with fire, but he maintained a remarkable coolness. The spring was distant about thirty yards from the edge of the hostile camp, but the water might soon draw other men there.

"As t'ell you are one o' Shelley's men," said the previous speaker of the original card players.

"Reckon I am, old man, an' I don't knuckle fur any critter in his brigade. I'm an' I'll serve that fur one of my own, an' what I don't know about biz is uncommon men."

This modest summary of his own importance did not materially affect the other men, who had heard such a story before, and they waited to be courteous to one of Shelley's men, especially when the cards were going around.

They received a good, solid game, but Sam had an opinion of his own. As Dick Ford shuffled the cards, the disguised Unionist suddenly leaned forward.

"Wait a bit," he said, touching his arm, "Le me see that attarction on thing."

"Before we play. Do you see this shooxter?"

"Yes," said Ford, rather indifferently.

"I want to observe that it is loaded?"

"Sartin'."

"Also, that one good marksman could clean out three of four unarmed men when holding such a barker?"

"Sartin'. I've done it myself."

"Good! Then you know how the machine works. Well, gentlemen, allow me to say, you are my prisoners!"

Sam suddenly changed his tone. The listless look vanished from his face, his eyes flashed, his voice was curt and sharp, and the revolver was presented full at Dick Ford's breast.

"What do you mean?" demanded the bushwhacker, still unsuspecting, but resenting what he thought a poor "joke."

"Look behind you."

The man obeyed.

There, only a few feet away, stood Ziah Strout, a revolver in each hand, the muzzles covering their breasts; their own weapons, which had been piled together, as before stated, under his feet.

"You are our prisoners!" repeated Sam, sharply, "and you mustn't kick against fate. If you try to run, or to alarm the camp, you are dead men."

As he spoke, he threw open his ragged coat at the breast, and they saw the Union blue and the glittering buttons underneath.

It was convincing, if his words were not, and they knew they were in hostile company.

"Don't move an eye-winker," said Ziah, warningly, "or you are dead men."

The bushwhackers were not fools. They saw that they were in trouble, and that the two men had the power to keep their word.

Doubtless, they had the will, also. The two men had been so long and through beiligerent looks, tried to prove the Unionists; but they had been caught by men of their own mettle, and it did not work.

Cavalry Sam allowed them to ease off a little of their breath in empty words, and then he ordered them to face to the north and march.

It was a galling downfall, but glittering sixes are always powerful in their way, and the ragged trio had a due regard for their lives.

They demurred, threatened, and swore; but ended by obeying the command. Arising, they started over the crest of the ridge, and Sam and Ziah followed after with their revolvers in hand.

In this way the ground between the spot and the Union cavalry was soon passed, and then the boys in blue were electrified at seeing four men, who, despite the fact that the guerrillas into coral in good order, though without music.

While they were being bound, Sam cast off his disguise, and prepared for further work. He wanted more prisoners, and he wanted to clear the Shenandoah Valley of a gang of men who were alike a nuisance to Union soldiers and Southern citizens.

"Ziah," he said, "you told me how they had taken in the trio, but Sam had no time for conversation.

It was the sight of Strout lurking in the bushes by the spring, which had caused him to do with the card-players, when he might have stolen away, and the scout had promptly covered the stacked weapons, as before stated.

The boys in blue were divided into two parties, and, while Carrington himself went away with one to gain the further base of the ridge, Ziah remained with the second, which had been left in charge of a lieutenant.

This party rode to the ridge, and left their horses in the bushes, after which they crept forward a little and waited.

It was not long before the old bird-call sounded in the night. It was the signal from Ziah to announce that he was in position, and an advance was at once begun.

Up the ridge they went like creeping panthers; then they ran along the line, and they dashed over the crest, and rushed down on the unsuspecting bushwhackers.

Never was there a more complete surprise. Not a guard had been posted; every man was in his ease, and many of them were fast asleep.

When they awoke, it was to find the enemy in their midst.

Jake Shelley was the first to recover his wits.

He sent a shot which dropped a cavalryman, and the shot fired the blood of the lieutenant. He shouted an order, and the wood roared out the echo of the volley.

Consternation seized upon the bushwhackers. They were not the trained soldiers of the Southern army, those gallant men who had made and kept a reputation for a superior force; but men who had always fought with the odds in their favor, and skulked in the bush when they should have been drilling.

They saw several of their men fall, and then rushed to flee.

Even Shelley did not try to stop them. He went with the foremost, and it was each man for himself.

At the base of the hill they had horses, and they rushed wildly to secure them.

The spot was reached; but they arrived only to rush into the hands of the Unionists, the first party, which had gained the position by a detour.

Their situation was desperate then. Hemmed in by a superior force, they were like rats in a trap, but desperation brought their teeth to the front, and they began to fight.

Sam shouted to them to surrender, but they only set their faces to the front, and made no such reply.

Before such an impetuous charge the Union line wavered for a time, and though the Unionists consolidated as soon as possible, a dozen or more men broke through, and took to the bushes, where they were useless.

The others were soon forced to throw down their arms and surrender. Captivity was better than death, and in sullen silence they submitted to the wishes of their conquerors.

Cavalry Sam would allow no violence, and the prisoners were systematically secured and the wounded given due attention.

No more than twenty prisoners in blue were killed. Four or five had wounds, and the one marked by Jake Shelley at the first of the fight had an ugly bullet track along the top of his head, but he was not hurt, and, though him, but, taken all in all, it had been a most successful performance.

Twenty-two prisoners and forty horses

had fallen into their hands, and six dead men lay under the pines. Sam had well obeyed his order to bring "at least one prisoner."

Soon further scouting showed them that no further force was in the wood, and then the return was begun.

Carrington regretted that Jake Shelley had been among those who escaped, but, sooner or later, he hoped to square the old account.

The scouting party returned in triumph, and the young captain gained fresh renown. The mention was made in the official dispatch of his "brilliant dash," and 'Ziah took pains to spread the news how the captain wormed his way out of a close quarter.

## CHAPTER XI. ACROSS THE OPEQUON.

Early in September, General Sheridan completed his organization of the army, and was ready for an offensive movement, but Grant was not so ready to give consent. If the army fought and was defeated, it would open the way for another invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania, and the Federal general had not forgotten Antietam and Gettysburgh.

The war must not again be carried to Northern soil.

On the sixteenth of September, however, the Union chiefs met at Charleston, and Sheridan unfolded his plans and explained all the points he had gained during his connection with the consolidated army. A good deal of this information had come to him through 'Ziah Strout, and Grant himself knew from experience that the scout was a man who seldom made mistakes.

The result was that order, given in the terse fashion peculiar to the lieutenant-general, which expressed so much in few words.

"Go in!"

So said Grant, and Sheridan prepared to execute the welcome direction.

The Union army was composed of the Sixth Corps, under General Wright, the Nineteenth under Emory, and the cavalry corps of Averill. Meritt was left in the rear. The Eighth Corps, under General Crook, was at Summit Point, and that, too, was to be brought into active service.

Previous to the advance, the army lay in front of Berryville, which is east of Winchester, and, in order to reach the latter place, it must march through a country which bristled with dangers.

Between Opequon Creek and Winchester, was Early's army, and though inferior to the Union army in point of numbers, he had many a wood and hill where a stout stand could be made.

There was a bad region into which to venture, but the commanding general was not the man to be dismayed at trifles. He determined to advance, and few there were of his men who were not ready to follow willingly where he led.

On the eighteenth, two days after the interview with General Grant, Sheridan was informed that 'Ziah Strout had come into camp in a fever to see him, and the scout was soon admitted to his presence.

The big band of the swamp man moved in an awkward salute, and then he abruptly broke the silence.

"I ain't disturbed you in any way, general, but I have news which I reckon will please you like sin."

"Then don't monopolize it any longer," said Sheridan, smiling. "Out with it."

"Early is swingin' his shooters furdur north. He is 'chuckin' 'em inter his left wing as a boy chucks in his vittles, an' a body would think Bunker Hill was full o' diamonds by the way he is wrapping about it."

Sheridan grew interested at once. When, a little before, the Confederate general had thrown his left as far as Bunker Hill, it had been to look as though he was himself considering an offensive movement, and 'Ziah's manner showed that he believed the new state of affairs to be of importance.

"Tell me briefly just what he has done," he dictated.

"Waal, he has pushed a heavy force from Bunker Hill toward Martinsburg, an' I opine that he wants to feel o' our forces. Tain't likely he means to desert, his claim an' brave Winchester would be disgraced."

"No; but, be that as it may, the significance of this movement, so far as we are concerned, lies in the fact that he is weakening the right by the new idea. Good! that is just what we want. If I don't greatly mistake, the time for action is at hand. We

must cross the Opequon at once, and hurry on to Winchester. What do you think of the idea?"

"First class, general, first class. The iron is hot, an' now is the time for strikin'."

Little more needed to be said. Sheridan saw his opportunity, and seized it with his usual promptness. 'Ziah was sent out on another scouting activity, and lay all along the Union lines. They were to move early in the morning, and that evening they were put under arms.

Word was sent to Crook to join the main force at the Opequon ford, while Averill and Torbert were to maneuver on Sorley's left sufficiently to engage his attention.

At three o'clock in the morning the forward movement was begun. Wilson's cavalry was followed by the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps in order, and the Opequon was forded at daylight.

This stream lies four miles east of Winchester, and between the two points are broken and wooded hills which are admirably adapted for defense.

Along this road hard fighting was to be expected, for in no other place could Early make such a stand.

'Ziah Strout had left the camp half an hour ahead of Wilson, and he at once proceeded to the ford to make sure that the way was clear.

All was peaceful about the place; and, after some scouting on both sides, he awaited the arrival of the army.

Wilson's men came up silently and in good order. 'Ziah looked at them admiringly as they approached, and his eyes glinted.

"Good stock, there," he muttered, "an' they will do a good bit o' slashin' afore the day is ended."

On came the big riders. The creek was safely crossed. Then they moved swiftly forward and soon neared a narrow pass where the hills frowned on either side.

'Ziah looked at them suspiciously, and gave a word of caution. If the enemy were near, it would be strange.

They were there, and on the alert. No one could fail to see the advantage of such a region, and they were at hand.

It was their first showing of teeth, and a gallant fight, but the victory was far forward with a dash, and the gorge was carried. Nor did they stop there.

One after another, each obstacle was met and removed until half the distance to Winchester was traveled.

There Wilson awaited for his comrades. The Sixth Corps came up promptly, but the Nineteenth had been unavoidably delayed, and it was fulsome o'clock before the line of battle was formed.

Position was taken with Emory on the right, and Wright on the left, the latter having Wilson on his flank.

Meanwhile, Early had not been idle. He saw his danger, and made prompt action to avert it.

The reconnaissance to Martinsburg had been repulsed by Averill, and then these troops were hurried back toward Winchester, where they met the Union cavalry, which at once formed a junction with Meritt.

Northwest of the town were several detached hills, and upon these the Confederates left their main force, leaving their fortifications like grim guardians of the future of the Southern cause; while a large force was thrown forward for the purpose of breaking the Union line at the proper moment and preventing their retreat.

'Ziah Strout, finding himself without occupation at this time, and inclined, as usual, to use his privilege of going where he pleased, left the Union center and moved along the road toward Averill's position.

"I b'lieve I'd like ter fight with them slashers this shyny," he soliloquized. "I shan't look so shyny as they do in their good clothes. I reckon I kin do it."

The scout did not care to acknowledge the real reason, which was to be near Captain Carrington.

From the time when Sam, then a boy, had taken to him at his swamp cabin, he had regarded him with an affection which had never wavered through the passage of years. Nothing gave him more pride than to look upon the handsome officer in his uniform, and he expected much of him.

"With his mind dwelling on these matters, he was striding through the wood in his noiseless way, when he suddenly came upon a single soldier, armed with a rifle."

Two men, in the dress of Union soldiers, were seated on a log, and engaged in a game

of cards; and the fact was so remarkable that 'Ziah was astonished.

He was given little time for reflection, however, for they quickly saw him in turn and suspended their playing.

One moment they looked, and he saw them mutter to themselves, and then they went coolly on with their game.

'Ziah, however, was not disposed to leave on so short an acquaintance.

"Hallo!" he said. "What are you doin' hyer?"

"Playin' poker," one of them answered.

"Take a hand, old man?"

"The game ter be played ter-day is battle," retorted the scout. "Why are you not at the front? I reckon you an' your men are needed there."

"Anything else you want ter know?" asked the man, calmly dealing the cards.

"Yes, thar is. I want ter know why you are not in with the rest at the front."

"Take it out in winter!" Don't you worry about us, Mister Strout, or whatever your name is. You jest tend ter yer own business an' we kin look out fur our'n," said Ben.

"I don't like to hear no more o' that," replied 'Ziah.

"It ain't the idee," retorted 'Ziah. "I don't propose ter see you chaps loafin' hyer when there is work ter do. Put up them kecks, an' let us see your places."

The first speaker swung around on the log and faced the scout defiantly.

"Look ahyer, Strout, you're barkin' up the wrong tree. You ax what regiment we b'long ter. We don't b'long ter no army. We're free rangers, jest like you. We go an' come whar we please. Eh, Ben?"

"Right you be, Dan, was the prompt response.

"You're no ter that; we don't allow any man ter meddle with us. You hear me, mister? Ef you do, trot along an' mind your own business."

"Why are you in uniform ef you don't b'long ter the army?" was the suspicious inquiry.

"Waal, yer see we found some o' the boys dead back a ways, an' as we thought our own was needed, we swapped outfits with 'em."

The words gave 'Ziah a key to the exact situation.

These men were vagabonds, vagrants, robbers of the dead, and the like—a class of men all too apt to hang on the rear of an army, and feast like vultures when there is food. The uniforms had been gained by robbery, and no doubt there was a stock of money in their pockets obtained the same way.

## CHAPTER XII. WINCHESTER.

"I see," cried 'Ziah, scornfully. "You ain't sojers; that is very clear. You are card-sharpers, an' that's the way I know I don't know any words mean enough ter describe you. Lord, you ought ter be hung ter these trees, an' I have half a mind ter try a little shootin' on you."

"Don't try it," said Dan, warningly, reaching for the rifle near his back.

But 'Ziah's own weapon came up quickly, and with a double click he covered the fellow-headed.

"Hold up!" he sharply said. "Ef you teches that shooter, out go your brains. You hear me? That's right; keep quiet and shady."

Ben and Ben, as the men had called each other, glared at him fiercely.

They were mad enough to do mischief, and they lacked the courage.

"Lower that weepen, you old fool, or I'll"

Dan paused in his hot address.

"What'll you do?" the scout grimly asked.

"I'll knock out your brains."

"You ain't to do it?"

The robber glared at him in silence. They had the will to kill, but they knew that one movement to seize their own weapons would doom them.

"Waal, what's you goin' ter do?"

"Nothin'," growled Dan. "Lower yer rifle an' march on. We don't want no trouble."

"Wait a bit," said 'Ziah, steadily. "I ain't done with you yet. When I see a serpent, I generally crush his head. You two fellows rise up an' march back five paces."

The robbers demurred, but the scout was firm. A rough, but not untruthful, remark was slapped his rifle breech, and after some delay his order was obeyed.

"Now," he grimly added, "take off them uniforms which do not b'long ter you. Undress."

Dan uttered a snarl of rage. The order was too much for his mental composure, and



a torrent of oaths began to pour from his lips. 'Ziah interrupted him sternly. He had advanced to the log, and with both their rifles at his side was completely master of the situation.

"Not one word," he ordered. "Undress!" "We won't," declared Dau. "We ain't goin' ter—"

"Ohey or swaller lead," tersely interrupted the scout.

Ben, who was the weakest of the two, hurriedly began to disrobe, and a little more persuasion of the foregoing kind impressed Dau strongly that he followed suit.

The casting off of the uniforms showed that they had another suit underneath, and though these were citizens' garments and well advanced to ward the ragpicker's standard, they were left, the men more appropriately clad than before.

They were evil, hang-dog looking fellows, and 'Ziah was inwardly chuckling at his victims.

Having gained his point he picked up both rifles, threw the uniforms over his arm, and resumed his way.

"Hold on!" said Dau. "Give us back our rifles."

"Nary time. Men like you don't need 'em. Keep cool an' let your wool grow."

Once more Dau indulged in his vicious banter, and then, when he started after 'Ziah, but when the latter wheeled and raised his gun the scavenger abruptly retreated.

The scout went on, chuckling at the way he had served the two ruffians. In the records of military life there is nothing so repulsive as the class represented by Dau and Ben. They hang upon the rear of an army, when they are about at all, and after a while they may be seen moving among the dead to secure available plunder.

These two wretches, who will again appear in our story, were Northern born and bred, and came from England and Scotland, other from one of the Middle States, and their record was a dark one. They had flourished as bounty jumpers and wholesale robbers for some time, and their luck was such that their first catch was from 'Ziah.

Not far did the latter carry his plunder, but, fudging a hollow log, he shoved the rifles and uniforms inside and hastened on to the river command.

He was yet some distance from that place when he was surprised at meeting Captain Carrington in the wood. The latter was on his way to gain word with Sheridan, and as he was about to admit of no delay, 'Ziah turned back and accompanied him, going as fast on foot as Sam's horse could move through the underbrush.

They arrived at the Union center just as the first real assault was made.

Sheridan had perceived that the Confederate right was too strongly posted to be successfully flanked, and all sorts of attention was turned on the center and left. The way was a rough one, for the boys in blue must charge up a wooded hill, through a narrow pass, and it could not but be a fatal charge for many of them.

The honor of leading the way was given to Ricketts' division, with Grover's close behind, and they started up the ascent with a cautious step.

A terrible fire at once greeted them from the batteries behind the pass. Shot and shell whizzed over their heads or tore through their ranks, and brave men fell thickly by the way, but those who survived were not made of common clay, and they pressed gallantly on.

They struck Early's center with resistless force, and the hissing fire was carried amid cheer from the assaults.

Carrington had delivered his message, and, with 'Ziah, was standing at the mouth of the pass through which the boys in blue had just crept.

The scout plucked off his old cap and waved it wildly in the air. He cheered at the top of his voice, and then added:

"It's a big day! It's a big day! Hurrah for the screamin' eagle! Cavalry Sam, could your slashers hev did better! Oh! they are just a drivin them critters home!"

It was well done, said Sam, with enthusiasm. "It was very well done, but the end is not yet. Early is wide awake and will soon show his talons."

"Not to-day," said the scout. "The end is not yet begun an' you will just see 'em get all goner pieces. Our boys know their business an'—"

'Ziah paused abruptly. There was some sort of victorious shout from the Union lines. They seemed to cheer, but the cause was still uncertain. Then, from behind rock and tree came the Confederates in a

counter charge, and two full divisions were hurled upon the exhausted men of Ricketts and Grover.

"By heavens! they are in serious danger," said Sam. "Did I not tell you Early would show his talons? Worse than that—Hal! yes, our men waver and turn. They will be driven back, and if the Confederates seize this pass, we be to our cause!"

The boys were indeed taking their turn, and they took it in a convincing way. Their wild charge beat back the Union troops, who turned and began a disorderly dash. The pass, while a heavy fire from the flank dropped men at every step.

"Lord! lord!" muttered 'Ziah, in consternation, "the day is lost, sure as sin!" They stood irresolutely, until the van of the attack was almost beside them. Then, suddenly, a dozen brave men turned and faced the enemy. It seemed as though they must be speedily swept away, but their action arrested Carrington to action.

Throwing up his arms, he sprang forward to meet the flying troops, and his voice rang out clearly.

"Back, men, back!" he said. "One bold stand here and the day is saved!"

Some there were who heard and obeyed him, and with 'Ziah and himself, took position near the first brave men, and the number began to increase rapidly.

At that moment, two guns of Captain Bradbury's Maine Battery were placed in position in the gap, and turned upon the Confederates, and a moment later the One Hundred and Thirty-first New York regiment poured in a telling volley from a wood at the enemy's rear.

All this created a strong ripple in favor of the Unionists, and the broken lines rapidly formed.

A deadly volley of musketry checked and wavered the boys in gray, and then the men in blue cheered again as the Confederates broke and fled.

The line of battle was reformed, and was really stronger than ever. The men had not suffered any paralyzing loss in numbers, and their success had given them courage and ardor.

Once more General Wright had the Union left, flanked by Wilson's cavalry, Emory the center and Crook the right, with Merritt commanding the northern extremity, and not much time was lost in re-organizing.

Then ensued the heat of the battle. General Early had chosen his second position well, and was resolved to hold it, for if he could not hold it, it would be to a point unpleasantly near Winchester.

For hours the thunder of battle awoke the echoes around the old town. Men and horses died, gallant deeds were performed, and the air was ever growing dark with smoke and dust. This continued until four o'clock, when there was a general movement forward.

Early and 'Ziah had returned to the Union right, and were doing their parts; and when horse and foot were hurled on Early's left, went with the tumultuous rush.

Assailed thus, and heavily stricken on their center, the Confederates broke and fled, stopping only when they reached the fortified heights in the very teeth of Winchester.

It was during this charge that Sam Carrington saw a startling sight.

The enemy's left had begun to waver, when a regiment in gray suddenly showed a new and a different color. It was the dress of a colonel had dashed along in the front, regardless of musket balls, and as he waved his sword the men responded by a cheer.

"Up and at 'em, boys!" shouted a Union officer. "It is Penrock's regiment!"

Sam had not needed the assertion. Despite the lapse of years, he had already recognized the colonel. He knew it was the Alfred Penrock of the old day.

Then came the Union charge, and the regiment in gray was swept from sight, many of them going down never to rise.

When because of the gallant colonel he could not tell, for the retreat had become almost a panic.

The heights did not long stay the boys in blue. These men, they strike heavily, the fortifications were carried, and Early's army went hastily through the town in retreat, their faces toward Strasburg.

Early's army followed the pursuit until dark, and the smoke of war was everywhere. Early did not halt until he reached Fisher's

—Captain Righty, and men of the Twenty-fourth Iowa regiment.

Hill—a position so strong, that it was advisable to make some delay before attacking.

On the hands of the Unionists were many prisoners, several pieces of artillery, and numerous battle-flags.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### FISHER'S HILL.

That night, General Sheridan rested at a house on the corner of Braddock and Piccadilly streets, in Winchester, from which place he sent his famous message to the Government at Washington:

"We have sent the enemy whirling through Winchester, and are after them tomorrow."

During the last of the battle, 'Ziah Strout had been riding with Averill's "slashers." It had been a very hot day, for many of them had lost their riders, and from that time the scout was always near to Sam Carrington. Whether fighting or galloping in pursuit, he watched his old-time friend closely, and over and anon a chuckle broke from his lips.

"Ef ever a man was made fur a soldier, it's him," he said, with pardonable pride.

That night, he might him, as they rested after the weary day.

"Et's been a good day," said the scout, placidly; "a proper good day. We've done more fur the Shenandoah to-day than has been done fur any other day in the war."

"We've captured the whole o' Winchester, an' the end is not yet."

"It will take desperate fighting to capture Fisher's Hill, an' I don't think that ground well, 'Ziah, and we can command the judgment of Early in taking the position."

"We must fight like sin ter captur it; but I reckon we are the boys ter do it. Lord! there had been a fight to-day."

Sam was silent for a moment, and when he spoke it was slowly.

"The war is taking us very near the old home, 'Ziah. It would not be at all strange if we tramped over the very acres we once trod when peace was through the land."

"Very likely we will; an' ef so, you will see many o' the old places left intact. Warburton's place still stands, an' so does Alfred Penrock's."

"I would like to see Augusta and Vida."

"Don't see why you can't, fur we shall cipher round hyer fur some time ter come, I reckon."

At that moment a messenger came to summon them to a superior officer, and they went promptly.

They were wanted for a scout. A negro had just come in, and reported that a body of the enemy was being formed on a wooded knoll some miles away, and though the report was not credited, it was advisable to investigate.

Our friends had been chosen because the country was so well known to them.

They were soon in the saddle, and riding toward the suspicion, and the intervening space was covered in a short time. When the base of the ridge was reached they dismounted, concealed their horses in a thicket, and went forward on foot.

There was no necessity for them to go in company, so they separated in order to do their work more speedily. Neither of them expected to find anything more than a few stragglers.

Let us follow Captain Carrington. He had crossed the hill once or twice in the past, when he was a boy, and he had a pretty clear idea of the place; but it must be a secret, ways he had learned from 'Ziah, from 'Ziah, he glided through the bushes and around rocks with scarcely a sound to betray his movements.

His half of the northern side of the ridge was soon explored, and nothing suspicious found.

By that time he was at the western extremity, and he was at once rounded the point and moved along the southern side. Nothing was found, he and 'Ziah would soon join each other.

Not many yards had he gone, however, when he heard the sound of voices. He had just entered a group of pines, and the speakers were directly ahead.

By that time Sam knew that no army was forming near the ridge, but it must be well to look after these unknown parties.

He crept forward on his hands and knees, the droppings from the pine branches being so thick and deadened every sound, and then a little twisting about gave him the desired view.

The night was but moderately dark, though it would have been impenetrably so in the pine forest if not seen for one cause. In a little space between the towering trees

half a dozen men were collected in a group, and all smoking, and by the fire-like gleams thus produced, he could see them plainly enough for his purpose.

"Evidently he had arrived just in the nick of time, for the first words he heard were of importance."

"You're a good feller, Jake Shelley, a mighty good feller, and I'd like to stop with you longer, but business is business, you know, and these dispatches must go to General Lee. That's all that can save Early's army."

"Then I won't keep you, but you must take a bottle of this wine with you. Such stuff don't grow on every bush, an' I'm right glad that you got in Winchester's as good a deal of it. Drink agin, an' be happy, my good man."

"Drink it is, Jake, early an' often. I'm glad I stumbled onto you. Here goes!" The burgling sound followed, and Sam began to comprehend a good deal of the state of affairs. One man in front of him was a messenger started by General Early to warn Lee, perhaps to ask for reinforcements, and the man following Jacob Shelley doubtless the others were followers of the guerrilla.

In point of fact, the villainous Shelley had seized his opportunity to do some plundering in Winchester that afternoon, and he was now filling his pockets with the wine when the dispatch-bearer chanced upon them. Being an old acquaintance, he had received an invitation to stop, and, already, he had taken more than was good for him.

While he drank, Sam was thinking rapidly. One of these men had dispatches of importance. If they reached Lee, good might come to the Confederate cause; if they did not, it would be to Sheridan's great advantage.

They must be stopped. A little later the messenger prepared to depart. He said good-by, effusively, to Jake Shelley, and then mounted his horse, which had been tied near at hand, and started away from the guerrilla camp.

Meanwhile, Sam had crawled away from the same locality and was walking slowly along the ridge. He intended to attack the messenger, but it was necessary to allow him time to ride beyond Shelley's hearing. That much of the plan was not difficult. The way was too rough for trotting, and the Unionist had only to watch his man and keep just in advance.

Anon, as the horseman was passing a thicket, a man arose from the cover of the bushes and grasped his rein, and at the same time his revolver was thrust forward so that it covered his breast.

"Halt!" said Cavalry Sam, promptly. "You are my prisoner, sir, and you had better make it come."

It was good advice, but the messenger did not seem inclined to obey. His lips framed an oath and his hand dropped on his saber, but Sam spoke again.

"Stop!" he said authoritatively. "Make a movement to draw a weapon and, by my life, I'll shoot you."

"He means business an' I'm hyer ter back him," said another voice, and 'Ziah glided forward.

"Who the devil are you?" roared the messenger.

"Not quite so loud; it's not safe for you. Who are we? Well, we are Sheridan's scouts, and you are wanted at camp. Will you surrender quietly?"

For answer, the man attempted to draw his saber, but Sam leaped forward, caught him by his arm and collar, and in a moment more dragged him from his horse and to the ground.

Then the work was quickly done. Laying hold of him together, they bound him up in quick order. He kicked and swore, as in duty bound, but the tide was against him, and he was soon helpless.

'Ziah did not know why he was wanted, but he entered heartily into Sam's plans. Having rendered their prisoner helpless, they again seated him on his horse and turned their faces toward the top of the ridge.

It was crossed, their own horses secured, and the return to camp begun. No adventure occurred by the way, and at an early hour the dispatch-bearer was landed at headquarters.

His papers proved to be of importance. They gave an account of the recent battle, together with valuable figures, and besought aid from General Lee.

On the whole, the capture was a lucky

one, and the scouts were deservedly complimented by their superior officers.

Sheridan kept his promise to be after Early as soon as possible, and on the twenty-second he moved on Fisher's Hill. Every one expected hard fighting before the place was carried, for it was one admirably adapted for defense.

Lying at the mouth of Strasburg Valley, its base washed by one fork of the Shenandoah River, it is between the North Mountain and Mountain ranges, and nature had done all that was possible for the Confederates.

Sheridan found Early's army with its right strongly intrenched at this place, and its left reaching as far as North Mountain. He saw his chance, and improved it.

Crook's corps was sent to gain the rear of the weak left, and Wright and Emory advanced against the front of the left and center.

Averill's cavalry had been thrown forward near the base of North Mountain, and Carrington and 'Ziah had no doubt but that they would see the enemy wept from their new position.

They had given a good deal of valuable information, enabling the Union leaders to work to good advantage, and the recent victory at Winchester had filled every man with enthusiasm.

Hostilities began in earnest at four o'clock in the afternoon.

Under cover of an attack from the cavalry, the Union footmen swept forward in an impetuous assault on the enemy's left, and North Mountain was carried with a rush, and the Confederates swept away.

At the same time the enemy had been assailed, and even Fisher's Hill, with its intrenchments, proved of no avail.

The strong works were carried, the men in gray driven back, forced to retreat precipitately; and then ensued another race up the valley.

They were followed in force to Port Republic, and by cavalry to Staunton, but at that point they found refuge in the Blue Ridge mountains, and were temporarily saved.

The war was booming in the Shenandoah Valley, however, and glad news flashed along the Northern wires.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### IN THE SADDLE.

After these last engagements, Sheridan and his entire army marched down the valley to execute an order given by his superior officer that "nothing be left to invite the enemy to return;" and that the order was well executed is evidenced by his official report. He says:

"We have destroyed over five thousand barns, filled with wheat, hay, and farming implements, and over seven hundred houses, and have killed in front of this army over four thousand head of cattle, and have killed and issued to the troops not less than three thousand sheep."

This compact sentence has more importance than is at first perceptible; for where crops grow and are harvested, there are men, and men are like to sow and reap, and see the fruits of his toil consumed by the fire-flood.

Added to the troubles from Early's army, which, though broken, was not spirit-crushed, the Unionists were continually beset by the people. To quote again from Sheridan's report:

"Every train, every small party, and every straggler, had to be watched by the people; many of whom have protection papers."

Wherever the Union riders moved, hostile eyes were upon them.

Men hid in swamps and amid rocky hills, ready to do any mischief they could, and it was not till they had a long rifle-shot to echo out on the air, perhaps sending death to a raider, after which the concealed marksmen would flee or hide.

So much in explanation of what is to follow.

Both Generals Sheridan and Averill had come to think very well of Sam Carrington. To his knowledge of the country, he added the dash and bravery which were so characteristic of both those great cavalry leaders, and though he was a Virginian by birth, they had already seen his devotion to the Union cause sufficiently tested.

It was this that, when they made the memorable sweep through the valley, Averill one day gave fifty men to Cavalry Sam, and instructed him to ride to the plantation of a man named Eager, and apply the torch to his barn.

This deed had already been attempted by a smaller force, but they had been beaten off by bushwhackers with severe loss.

Carrington, riding at the head of his force, with 'Ziah Strout by his side, found plenty of food for reflection.

"This move will bring me very near the old home," he said, to the scout.

"Et will, sure as sin. Eager's is about three mile, as the crow flies, from all the old place, and the swamp, your old home, and Warburton's."

"My old home, you should say. I am told that not a stick is left of the house."

"I'm afeerd that Warburton's will go the same way."

"Not by the will of our leaders. We have orders to spare those buildings, thank Heaven."

"Good enough. But why?" "There are several reasons. Vida Warburton is known to be loyal; nothing of importance has been harvested this year, and there are no males about the place, except food for reflection. It is not going to the family through all their troubles. There is little there to invite our men."

"I heard that old Eager was killed at Fisher's Hill. Is that so?"

"Yes, he was shot dead in the intrenchments. He was the last of the family, which makes me less reluctant to do the work we now have in hand. It seems that a gang of bushwhackers have taken possession of his old place, and are trying to drive away the men we will work to drive them away, and then fire the barn."

"That's easy done."

Sam relaxed into silence. It would be odd if the events of the next few days did not in some way bring him in contact with the Warburton sisters; indeed, he fully intended to see them if duty would permit.

How he would be received was uncertain. Augusta and he had always been good friends before the beginning of the war; in fact, he knew her father had hoped for a closer friendship, but was not sure but what their own minds ran in the same channel until the first gun at Fort Sumter separated them so widely.

But Vida, who must now be a young lady, he had always been an admirer of; the old-time "Mad Sam," and when trouble came, she had not only spoken for the Union with girlish enthusiasm, but had sent a note of warning to Sam when he was menaced by the rioter.

Still, many years had passed—years of war, trouble, change and hardship—and he was not certain how the ladies would feel toward him.

In due time the little band emerged from a wood, and the Eager house a hundred yards distant. In times of peace it had been a prosperous place. The owner had been driven to ruin by penuriousness, and the dollars had gathered swiftly in his hands; but war had stricken the plantation, its master was numbered among the dead of Fisher's Hill, and men were at hand to apply the torch to the building which held the hay and grain.

To all appearances barn and house were deserted; not even a dog, that feature of the old-time household, was visible; but Captain Carrington was not so sure that they had the place to themselves.

The bushwhackers had been there a few hours before, and though it was probable they had been wise enough to take themselves out of danger's way, there was nothing sure about it.

Barn and house were fifty yards apart, and the boys in blue marched at once toward the latter, and walked a few paces away. Then Sam dismounted, went to the door, and rapped sharply.

No answer was returned; no sound was made, except that made by his own movements.

Twice he repeated the summons, and then tried the door, but it was fastened on the inside.

"So 'Et it in," suggested 'Ziah.

"We will try the windows first. I do not like to do any further damage than is necessary."

"Which way not leave the house alone an' fire the barn, fer onet?"

"Because there may be men within the house who would put out the fire as soon as we left. Go around to the left, 'Ziah, and I will go to the house on the opposite side."

They separated, and Sam searched of unfurnished widows. 'Ziah found everything tightly closed, but as he did not meet Sam at the rear he concluded he had had better luck, and went on to find him.



The captain was not at the western end, however, and Ziah turned the next corner the moment he saw the horses and their leader were invisible.

"Whar's Captain Carrington?" he asked, in surprise.

"We got around that way a minute ago," said one of the men, pointing as he spoke. "Ain't you seed him since?"

"No."

The scout retraced his steps. Everything he had first found it, and he again made the circuit without finding the missing man.

"Be Blamed of it ain't queer," said Ziah. "Hyer, two or three of our critters hop down an' help me. Captain Sam must have gone in, though he did it in a mysterious way. Trow around the old ark an' try ev'ry winder."

The direction was promptly obeyed, but the bluecoats found the house securely fastened at every point, and when they met they looked at Strout, inquiringly.

"Summat's wrong," he tersely said. "The cap'n has gone inside, but I'm mighty afeard he didn't go in good order."

"Mebbe he fastened the winder behind him for a joke," suggested one of the cavalrymen.

"Bah! that ain't his way. Hyer, you slathers, put your shoulders agin the door an' we'll bust her in."

The first part of the order was obeyed, but their united efforts failed to move the door. It was of good material and seemed remarkably well secured on the other side.

Ziah became angry. The fear was strong in his mind that bushwhackers were inside the house, and that Sam was their prisoner; and, raising his rifle, he shattered glass and splintered the nearest window, and the way was open.

"Get certain humbly on the inside, but one wrench trow it down and he saw an empty room. Looking around, he motioned to two other men to join the four already in his service, and one after the other they entered through the breach.

"Keep your icky ready, boyees" cautioned the scout, "fur I'm c'ennamore sure we shall have a brush. That's grays inside es here as shoo."

Yet, as they moved from room to room, only the same sight met their view—scantily furnished apartments and no human tenants. The first floor was quickly examined and the second investigated, but still no sign of Cavalry Sam or the bushwhackers.

"They ain't here," said one of the soldiers, blankly.

"Tow furgit the sulter," said Ziah, grimly.

"That's a lump; we will have a light an' go down."

The idea was quickly acted upon, and they descended a flight of narrow stairs. All was superlatively dark below, and the lamp, an old tallow-candle, only served to make the fact more apparent.

One or two of the soldiers showed a disposition to act as rear guards, but the scout, though fully convinced that no critter was at hand, was not a man to shrink from darkness.

His actual courage was not then tested. Investigation showed an ordinary cellar, but it took him a while to show signs that any human being except themselves had been there for some time.

Ziah paused, when the search was completed, and looked blankly at his companions.

"Wal, by thunder!" he ejaculated. "There's nobody here," the bluecoat slowly said.

"Then, where is Captain Carrington?" a second man asked.

"That's what I want ter know," said the scout, quickly. "Have any of you slathers an' me, hyer, but I'm mighty afeard that thin smoke nor sink inter the arth. Whar is Cavalry Sam?"

It was a very pertinent question, but one not easily answered. His disappearance smacked somewhat of the marvelous, and theories were not plentiful.

At that moment, however, the house seemed almost shaken by a tremendous knocking at the door, a sharp halloo! was added, and Strout's face brightened.

"He's back, sure as sin," was his comment.

The men ran up the stairs together, but as they did so several shots were heard, mingled with renewed shouts, and Ziah ran to the broken window with a fresh fear assailing him.

The outside scene had changed materially. The bluecoats were no longer visible, but in

their place was an equally large body of men who wore Confederate gray.

## CHAPTER XV.

### CLOSE QUARTERS.

The sight startled and amazed Amamah for a moment, but he was not long in comprehending the state of affairs. He remembered the knocking at the door and the first shouts, and it was evident that the bluecoats had been surprised and driven off by a superior force of the boys in gray.

Even then, he could hear the report of muskets off at the west, and he knew the Union men were in rapid retreat.

He swept his handful of men back from the door.

"Keep out of sight!" he ordered. "The enemy may not know anybody is inside, an' as we can't 'wup 'em we will try the effect o' hiding."

He went hurriedly to the western window, and, as he had expected, saw the Unionists in retreat, closely followed by the Confederate cavalry. The latter had such a superiority of numbers that the few who had stayed by the house were not needed for the pursuit.

If Ziah really expected them to leave the house unnoticed, he was soon undeceived.

The first party to come out of the door, and the bluecoats looked to Ziah for advice and directions.

He walked to a window near the broken one, thrust the curtain a little aside, and looked out. Upwards of a score of gray riders sat grimly on their horses, while the one who was knocking at the door wore the uniform of a captain.

He knew that they would not be satisfied to leave the building unsearched. That much was certain. The next thing in order was the question, what would become of the Unionists when such a search was made? Clearly, there was not room enough in the house for two parties of such antagonistic tendencies. They must be kept out of—

In event of a resistance, the bluecoats could not stooge, but the probability of a defeat at the end made such a course a last desperate resort. Under the circumstances, it would be better to hide than to fight.

The scout thought of the barn and ran to the window looking out upon it. The way was clear; no Confederate stood in the path of retreat, and Ziah resolved to make the attempt.

He spoke to the bluecoats and they caught at his plan. It was a risky one, with the chances against them, but it was the proverbial safety of the winning plan.

One after another, and with remarkable agility, they sprung through the window. Once on the ground, Ziah cast a longing glance at the southeastern tower, but it was a mile distant and not to be considered. The barn was their only chance.

Breaking into a run, they made a dash for the refuge. For forty yards, the corner of the house concealed them from the view of the Confederates, but as they neared the barn, the scout looked around and plainly saw the whole squad of graycoats.

It was a crying moment. If one of their enemies chanced to observe them as they ran, their hopes would indeed be desperate; but, tired of knocking, the boys in gray were at that moment engaged in forcing an entrance, and no one saw the fleeing Unionists.

The barn was reached and safely entered. It was of the usual pattern, and well filled with hay and grain. Its roof was high and its doors were closed.

Heedless of his crops and then hastened to join Early's army only to find a grave at Fisher's Hill.

"Now," said the scout, "it's our policy ter hide as long as we can, an', if disskivered, ter fight like sues. Get up on the haynow, two or three of ye, while the rest on us watches the grays. Mebbe they won't disturb us at all."

"They won't let the premises go unsearched," said one of the cavalryman, decidedly.

"Likely they won't, but we won't squeal untill we're burnt."

Ziah watched the Confederates from a crack between the boards, and he saw some of them enter by the window and afterward open the door. A little time passed, and the private was provoked to searching the interior, and then the privates of the command settled down around the cabin, and the officers seemed to be making themselves comfortable inside.

The probability of further trouble was so great that Ziah began to consider the feasi-

bility of slipping out of the barn by the rear and making an attempt to gain the woods, a rather desperate idea, since so wide a field must be crossed; but at that moment there was a movement among the grays which assumed of painful interest to the handful of Unionists.

A dozen of the former left their companions and advanced toward the barn, and one of the soldiers grasped Ziah's arm nervously.

"They are coming to search here," he said.

"Mebbe, an', possibly, only ter see what shoo they hev got foddin' fer the hay now, ev'ry one on ye, an' burrow down deep in the kiver. We musn't be found."

Leaving them to carry out their idea, let us return for awhile to the horse.

The force which had come upon and scattered the Union cavalrymen was two hundred strong, and led by a Confederate colonel. He had himself gone in pursuit of the fugitives, leaving fifty men, under a captain, to guard the house; and this captain, enjoying his brief authority, was resolved to make the most of it.

When the search of the house had failed to reveal any occupants, he had not a suspicion that any of the Unionists were near; so he went in, accompanied by a surgeon and a corporal, who were the only officers with him, and proceeded to make himself at home.

He settled down in the best room, and then, lacking servants, sent two privates to explore the cellars. As they explored, but nothing exciting hopelessly dried bread was found. Still, there was joy behind the sorrow. Down in the cellar they found a lot of bottled wine, and when this was brought up, the cavalry captain started to drink.

"Ha! ha! how is this, doctor?" he demanded. "Here is stuff a thousand years old, more or less, and we will use it—for medicine, or wine. But see it sparkle. Heave, then, suit it better than chasing the invaders across the country!"

"If my opinion is worth anything, I should say 'Yes, verily,'" the surgeon replied, with a very cautious and guarded air.

"Hustle around, men, and find a corkscrew."

"Hang the corkscrew!" said the captain.

"Shut up, you fellows, and get to work!" He struck the neck of the bottle against the table, neatly decapitating it, and then the bottom of the treasure went up in the air, and the wine began to trickle down his throat.

His companions were not far behind, but on the eve of tasting, the surgeon paused.

"Make haste, corporal. Our general here, is getting angry, and he will rob us if he can. Drink early and often."

No more was said until each man had emptied his bottle, and then the captain smacked his lips.

"By Jove, that's good," he commented. "Very like the nectar of the gods. Old Eager, or whatever his name was, was a true patriot. He has done much for the Southern cause. Let us drink to his memory."

"You are our superior officer; we dare not disobey," answered the jovial surgeon.

Down went the second round, and the last speaker began to feel the effects of his potent draught and began to go through the steps of some dignity with slow movements and awful dignity.

He was fat and clumsy, and his friends began to second him, and, all of which pleased him well, but when he saw the two privates indulging in smiles and winks at each other, he grew angry and hurled the empty bottle at them, or, as another. The last crashed against the door, for they had bent an unceremonious retreat, and then the surgeon slammed the door together and bared it.

He stepped out of the window to shake his fist at the offending soldiers, and then went back to the table.

"We are waiting for you, doctor," said the corporal, in a low, solemn tone.

The doctor's antics being over, he began to realize that he was sleepy.

Once more they drank around, and then the doctor had a funny story to tell. He wrenched his heels on the table and began the yarn.

He had often told it before, and to admiring audiences, but, somehow, on this occasion, he seemed to have lost his story, or, at least, he frequently paused to yawn.

Having finished, he looked around for the customary applause, but none came. Both his companions had settled back in their chairs and were, to all appearances, fast asleep.

He started in surprise, but, just then, being caught by another restless caw, he realized that he was himself far gone on the same road.

"Zounds!" he ejaculated, "that wine smells so tremendously. It must have been bottled for at least a thousand years, as Pratt said. By Jove! I'll find a bed, and take a nap. Where did I see one? Oh, in this way, I think."

Then, as he reeled toward the door, staggering as he went. He moved like a drunken man, and yet he was one who seldom lost his feet. Some time was occupied in manipulating the latch before he succeeded in opening the door, but when he entered and saw the bed, he felt well rewarded.

Identically it had been occupied quite recently, for the clothing was in a disarray, but he was not in a very particular state of mind. He raised his heavy form and dropped upon it with a sigh of relief.

"Then, spreading his ample form well out, he pillowed his head and uttered a chuckle. "This is better than chasing the enemy."

So said the surgical man, but, sleepy as he was, he felt a huge bunch under the clothing, and he blunted the edge of his pleasure somewhat.

"He gave the clothes a vicious wrench, but the bunch was still there.

"Haug it!" he said, "I ought to have a servant to make the bed. Wonder if I can straighten it myself?"

He swung his feet off the bed, but as he attempted to stand erect, lost his balance and fell flat on the floor.

He rose scarcely down when the bed-clothes became agitated at the very point where the hard bunch had been. They trembled, heaved upward, and then a bundle of something blue rolled out from between them, dropped over the head of the bed and sought cover underneath.

All this had been quickly done, but the moving object looked strangely like a man in Union uniform.

"Reckon I'm pretty drunk," muttered the surgeon, as he gained his knees, "but if the bed won't hold me, the floor will. I'll sleep under instead of on top of it!"

## CHAPTER XVI.

### WHICH TREATS OF BOTTLED WINE.

Let us now return to Captain Carrington. When he and 'Ziah went in search of a place by which to enter the house, he was, at the start, more successful than the scout.

He found a window which was unfastened, and it was the work of only a minute to shove up the lower part, brush aside the curtain and enter.

All this had been silently and quickly done, and he believed the room he had entered to be unoccupied; but, while yet hanging from the window, he was seized by strong hands and borne to the floor.

Half a dozen men had been concealed behind various articles of furniture, and they had timed their attack so well that he was given opportunity for neither resistance nor alarm.

One of their number secured the window, while the others bound and gagged their prisoner.

Sam had struggled desperately, but with such odds against him it was all in vain.

His captors did not delay long. They knew just what the situation outside was, and that if the one retreated to a small room back of the one he had so unskillfully entered.

In this place he was deposited in a chair, and then the men wheeled a heavy, old-fashioned wooden door against the door, thus completely concealing its existence from any intruder.

This explains why 'Ziah and his companions found no trace of Cavalry Sam. None of them knew of the existence of the door of the house; and, in the limited time given them, they did not suspect that one room had escaped their notice.

Captain Carrington looked at his captors closely while they were securing the door, and had no trouble in classifying them.

They were of the same grade as Jake Shelley's gang, and wolves could not be less mean.

One of them came over to the prisoner when the work was done, and regarded him with a scowl.

"Now, mister, how do you like it?" he

all likely I am pleased," Sam promptly answered.

"Reckoned you wouldn't be," said the man, with a chuckle. "But, see yere! Your cutthroats are comin' inside, an' we want ter lay low while they are hyer. So I will add that if you keep your mouth shut, an' I will add that if you give any alarm I will blow your brains out."

"Rest easy; I shall give no alarm," Sam declared.

"Good. Now, see that you keep your word, for we mean business from a to z."

The speaker turned away, and fixed his gaze upon a table at one side of the room. Upon it were ten or a dozen bottles of some liquid which looked like wine, and beside them sat two more, which were empty.

"Come, boys," he continued, "we may as well finish our feast while we can. We may be prisoners in five minutes; an' I swear et them bluecoats are goin' ter have this wine."

His companions applauded his sentiment in a subdued manner, and all sat down at the table and began to drink.

One of the men broke an emptied rapidly, and by the time the first sounds from without the room announced that 'Ziah and his friends had gained an entrance, the wine was rapidly disappearing.

Captain Carrington sat up and listened. He heard the cavalrymen making their search, but dared not call to them.

His captors were men who valued life highly, and they would surely keep their word in the sound of alarm.

But, as their feast went on, he was pleased to see that the wine was hitting them hard.

They grew dull of look, yawned frequently, and seemed fast falling into the meshes of intoxication.

At last, one man laid his head on the table and ceased operations. To all appearances, he was asleep. His evident comfort excited and amused Sam, but he lay down on the floor, and at once became quiet.

Others followed their lead, and then Cavalry Sam sat in wonder, and looked to see the whole gang apparently dead drunk.

He did not wait to stir for some time, for he feared that they were shamming—it must either be that, or else the wine was remarkably powerful—but their heavy breathing had vanished his fears.

He shuffled his feet, but none of them moved.

"By Jupiter!" he thought, "I believe they are clean gone. If they are, I'm going to get out of this. But how? It is hardly safe to go to the door, as I don't hear any sounds from him, I don't know but he has left the house. I reckon I had better play a lone hand, and I'm inclined to think I can easily get out of these bonds. I'll try!"

He seized the action to the word, and the bonds, hurriedly tied, did not long resist his great strength. They fell off, and his hands were free, after which he was not long in liberating his feet.

"Now, then, for liberty," he added, to himself.

He glided to the door, removed the fastenings and opened it. Only the secretary lay back of the door, fast asleep.

Pausing for a moment, he looked back and saw his own weapons where the bushwhackers had laid them.

It would not do to leave them behind, so he slipped on his leggings, secured them, and went again to the door.

The secretary was easily removed, and he stood alone in the outer room. The sound of voices from that adjoining it reached his ears, and about to abruptly open the door and surprise 'Ziah, when caution came to his aid.

Once, while in the prison-room, he had thought he heard the sound of muskets, so he moved so slowly.

Opening the door a trifle, he looked through, and saw three men in Confederate gray seated at the table. They were the captain, the corporal, and the surgeon, and he gained his view when the door had just closed that he had better seek a bed.

Sam saw the bottles on the table, and, even then, he decided that there must be something about the wine. It had effected the men more like druggists than according to the way of intoxication.

His reflections on that subject came to an end, for the surgeon turned toward the door, and it became so evident that he must get out of sight. Where could he go? Not back into the prison-room; so only one room remained in which to hide.

"The bed!" he thought. "This man will

probably return to his companions in a moment; the bed will hide me."

And thus it was that, when the surgeon lay down and found the couch so uneven, Cavalry Sam was at the bottom of his trouble—and of the bed-clothing.

When the former lost his balance, and fell to the floor, the blue bundle that whisked over the edge of the bed was the same Sam in his uniform.

He imagined he had gained a point by his change of base, but the sleepy surgeon soon discovered his error. Finding his muscular power on the wane, he managed to sleep under the bed instead of on its top.

So under he went, drawing his corpulent form to cover without regard to dignity, and Sam acquired back his right position against the wall in an attempt to keep out of the way.

"I will pillow my head on a soldier's bed," quoth the surgeon, unconsciously falling into poetry; and with these words, he laid the aforesaid head upon Sam's manly breast.

The doctor was surprised, for he had referred to the bare floor; but as he roused a trifle, Sam's fingers closed over his throat.

"You're mistaken the number of your room, old man," said the Unionist. "This hotel believes in accommodation, but not too much of it."

The Confederate began to squirm in a lively way, but the grip on his neck was a resistless one, and Sam held him where he was wanted.

Confusion reigned in the doctor's mind; but he was too far gone to get a clear idea of the situation, and after a little mental anxiety, the captain saw that he was actually falling to sleep in his hands.

The bottled wine was working well. Five minutes passed, and the surgeon was out of the race. He lay prostrate, breathing heavily, and Sam drew him fully under the bed, and prepared to look after his own interests.

Creeching from under cover, he moved toward the cabin and looked the field over.

In the front room the two officers still slept, and around the building the other soldiers were collected, taking their ease while they waited for the morning.

"How the dickens am I to get out of this?" mentally inquired the Unionist. These fellows have evidently driven off my boys in blue, and my chances of being found are large."

While he reflected, a footfall behind him caused him to wheel abruptly, and he looked around to see one of the bushwhackers standing before him.

He had left the fellow sleeping in the prison-room, but he had thrown off his stupor, and now confronted Sam with a huge knife in his hand, while his face was full of triumph.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### IN THE BARN.

When 'Ziah and his companions saw the boys in gray advancing toward the barn they naturally felt a good deal of mental agitation.

There were already enough men in the building to suit their taste, and the introduction of more looked like crowding the lodgers.

The scout's suggestion that they conceal themselves in the haymow met with hearty approbation, and there was sudden scattering as the bluecoats went up and into the hay.

Dignity was not to be considered then, and they burrowed down with more haste than system.

There was still a slight commotion along the mow when the Confederates entered, but the smaller party had disappeared from view and left no sign.

At the head of the grays was a man who filled the office of corporal—more than that, he overpowered the office and ran down on all sides. In his opinion Corporal Briggs was the one of the best soldiers of the war, and his ambition was so towering that, having taken the first step, he already had designs on the office held by one Jubal Early, general in the Confederate service.

The corporal placed one arm akimbo, and while the other hand performed a circle in the air, he surveyed the interior of the barn.

"A goodly stock of animal food," quoth he. "Hay and grain enough here to supply our equines for an indefinite period. I thought as much before I entered. We are lucky to be ahead of the enemy. Here, men, go to the mow and throw down enough to feed our whole command. The colonel will return when he has chopped up those



runaways, and I must have all in order for him."

The men obeyed promptly. All set about the work except the corporal, himself, and as they labored, he paced the floor with a slow and massive tread.

Three pitchforks had been found and worked in by as many men, while the others held their hands, and the chief mayor of the hay began to move rapidly from its bed to the floor below.

All this was of intense interest to the concealed boys in blue.

Every spear of hay removed decreased the amount above them, and at that rate it looked as though they would soon be uncovered and taken in by the impromptu farmers.

Every Confederate soldier, however, secretly, they might have seen sundry tremblings of the hay not made by them, for as they tossed down the hay the luckless Unionists burrowed deeper and tried to get away from the sharp tips of the pitchforks, which had already wounded one or two of them.

"Ziah had no more advantageous position than the others."

Was near the edge of the mow, with a clear space at one side, where he could quickly slide to the lower floor when he saw fit, and as the work went on he began to gain an idea.

It did not seem possible that the Unionists could escape discovery. It was liable to come at any minute, and when it did, it meant ruin to the little handful; so the sergeant turned to his rifle man.

His plan was a desperate one, but he resolved to act upon it.

A little wriggling took him clear of the hay, and he dropped lightly down into a dark passage, gaining the level of the pampous corporal.

This was just what he wanted, for he had designs on that same officer, and, creeping forward near the open floor, he saw him standing in an attitude of deep thought. His gaze was fixed absently on the light pile of hay before him, and it is probable some property agricultural problem was surging through his mind.

His reflections were interrupted by a touch on his shoulder, and he looked around to see a man who was a stranger to him; a man in a soldier's garb, but rather rough-looking, withal, while in the present case his appearance rose to the level of the horrible.

In his hand was a cocked revolver, and its muzzle directed the eyes of the corporal, full and steady.

"Be still!" said this unwelcome apparition. "Utter one word and you are a dead man."

Ziah—for it was he who held the revolver—meant every word that he said, and the corporal knew it, too.

"Why—why—why—?" he stammered, obviously alarmed; but the scout interrupted him.

"Not a word, mister. I mean business, an' here's the whole case in a few words. I'm interested in this barn, an' I won't have the hay tumbled down that-a-way."

"But it's for the Confederate army," declared the corporal.

"Confederate thunder! You keep still till I have you to speak. As I was sayin', this must be stopped. I am here an' you know I've got you solid. One tech o' my finger plants lead on your home-are, an' I'll tempt me, but I am wicked on my mind. Now, hear me: I want you to sing out for them chaps above an' tell them ter stop work an' descend. When they come down, tell them to return ter the others an' leave you alone in the barn. Will ye do it?"

"Yes," said the corporal, with assumed sullenness, and with a gleam in his eyes.

Hold hard, mister. You mean mischief. It won't work. When they come down I shall be hiding in yonder passage an' my revolver will cover your brain. If you set their suspicions at work by word, look, or figure, I'll shoot you dead. Understand?"

The corporal comprehended only too well, and the situation filled him with fury. He demurred a little, but Ziah sternly cut him short. Work was going on above and the Unionists might be discovered at any time. Matters must be pressed.

Unwillingly cowed, the corporal agreed to faithfully carry out his part of the programme. "Ziah retired to the passage, and the soldiers were bailed as directed. The corporal ordered them down and they came promptly.

Perspiring freely, their leader glanced toward the passage and dimly saw a revolver pointed at his head. Its meaning could

not be misconstrued, and then he told the men to join their comrades by the house while he remained in the barn. They went, laughing, saying that the old corporal would be obliged to take a nap, and that unhappy officer was left alone with his enemy.

"Ziah came out of the passage, chuckling, genially."

"I did wal, old man, you sartingly did. I give you credit for that. Now, we will go on the mow."

"What for?" demanded the poor fellow, in alarm, for he began to fear boldly mischief.

"I'll show you later," was the grim reply. Again the corporal demurred, but the potent revolver presented a slight flourish and in various places, and then, one after another, the boys in blue came out, shaking off the clinging hay, and Ziah laughed at the expression on the corporal's face.

"I shall soon make a change o' base. Bind him, men!"

The luckless corporal could scarcely keep back a groan, but he was too sensible to kick against a mountain, and he stood in silence while his captors bound him in a fashion to suit themselves.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CONTINUED TROUBLE.

Captain Carrington was for a moment startled by the appearance of the bushwhacker. He was a brawny fellow, and his face was brutal, while the knife in his hand very plainly showed that he meant mischief.

Only for a moment did Sam quail before him. Brave as any man, and with full confidence in his physical powers, he would not have trembled before any man, and as his wit flowed back his sole thought was how to subdue the man without permitting an alarm.

"Aha!" chuckled the bushwhacker, "I have you again. You thought to slide out of me again, but you have run again in silence."

"What is the rock? I don't see it," Sam retorted.

"It is here; I am rock enough ter wreck your craft," was the confident reply. "Now, you brimmounted sojer, vest wheed an' trot back where you came from."

"Who says so?"

"I do. Mebbe, you don't know me. I'm Jack Barnes, o' Jake Shelley's command. You've heard o' him, no doubt."

"I have, as a cutthroat."

"I'm another, an' the worst of the lot. I'm a tearer o' the worst kind. D'y'e heard o' me? No, you haven't. Sam Krum had advanced quite near to the Unionist. His words were somewhat exaggerated, but the scowl on his face and the upraised knife were not to be misunderstood. Sam Krum was the Unionist's chief, but he was resolved to nip that proceeding in the bud.

So, as the last word fell from the man's lips, the captain made a for a leap, and he swung his knife around quickly and made a slashing stroke.

Had that stroke been unchecked it would have gone hand with Cavalry Sam, but he caught Barnes' wrist in midair, and the knife stopped as though by magic.

It was no time for fine or generous work. A single blow would ruin Sam, and almost at the moment his left hand stayed the knife, his right shot out, tightly clutched, dealing his enemy a stunning blow between the eyes.

It was a blow which would have felled him had he not been held in a firm grasp; and, as it was, it brought tears to his eyes and confused him, while his knife fell rattling to the floor.

Then Sam grappled and bore him to the floor, expecting an easy victory, but the fellow was pluck to the backbone, and he rallied and put forth all of his great strength.

Over and over, and over and over on the floor they rolled, neither being able for some time to gain the mastery.

They fought in silence. Sam dared not

utter a word; Barnes could not, because of the pressure on his neck.

Once, in their rapid twistings, they rolled parting under the bed and against the surgeon; but he was not to be awakened easily, and slumbered on peacefully.

At last, Sam put forth all his power and crammed the bushwhacker into a corner.

This gave him an advantage, and in a moment more he was kneeling on his breast.

Then, from the back of his neck, he drew a concealed knife and held it before his eyes. "Lie still, an' I'll heal you. Your life is balanced against your silence. One word of alarm seals your fate!"

There was no mistaking the keen infection of his words.

The bushwhacker knew he meant what he said, and lay still; but in his heart was a fierce rage. He only required a chance to again show his claws.

At that moment Sam heard voices in the outer room, and then some one's name was pronounced.

He understood the situation; some of the soldiers had entered the house and were trying to awaken the Confederate soldiers.

"What's the doctor?" he heard asked, distinctly.

"In the next room, I reckon," was the reply.

"Go in and see. I don't understand why the cap'n sleeps so sound."

Sam Carrington was stirred into instant activity.

A soldier was about to enter the room he was occupying, and such an intrusion would result in his sorrow.

Acting on his first impulse, he dragged his prisoner under the bed, and, giving no heed to the surgeon, placed his knife at Barnes' throat.

"One word and you die!" he hissed.

The door then opened, and a Confederate soldier entered.

He paused and glanced curiously around.

"No sign of him here," he said.

"He must be there. Ain't he in bed?"

"No."

"That's queer."

"He may be in some other room."

Another soldier strode in after the first. "Mebbe he's hid," he said, "but the doctor's an' gone ter sleep under the bed," he said, as he moved forward.

Cavalry Sam shut his teeth tightly.

Discouraged was he, certainly, but he was inclined to yield faintly.

He had a knife in one hand and a revolver in the other, and he could make matters sultry for the enemy, to say the least.

It was not until he had entered his mind, the bushwhacker made a desperate effort to free himself, but he only served to show Sam's mettle.

The revolver swept through the air, the butt struck the man full in the temple, and, with a groan, he fell back senseless.

The soldier stopped just as he was about to lift the curtain which hung around the bed, and then sprung back.

"Hat did you hear that?" he demanded.

"Thought I heard a groan."

"So he did, but it come from under the bed. I thought I heard a thrashin, about, too."

"Mebbe the doctor's under thar, an' sick."

"That's the idee! I didn't think on it before."

Once more he advanced, but at that moment a new voice sounded keen and sharp.

"Halt, there! I've got you covered, and if you yell or try to run, out go your brains!"

The two soldiers were at the side of the bed, and, looking toward the foot, they saw a human head rising to view, while a pair of glittering revolvers covered them, a muzzle to each man.

"Stand where you are, and don't try to draw a weapon," continued Cavalry Sam, sternly. "I am boss here, and one move on your part seals your fate."

Even as he spoke, the gallant captain was wondering what he was to do next. He was, to all appearances, without a man at his back, while, besides the fellows under the bed, who were liable to arouse at any moment, he had two very lively foes in front of him and two score more outside the building.

It looked as though he was saddling a hard horse to ride, but he had no choice but to go with the current.

"Who the deuce are you?" demanded one of the soldiers.

"Your master," was the terse reply.

"By the tends you are a Northerner."  
"Oh me what you will, I am here at present. You see these revolvers looking at you, do you? Don't try to draw in return, nor to shout for aid. If you do, a lump of lead will settle it."

The soldiers were furious. Brave as men average, they would gladly have engaged this bold stranger in battle, but no sensible man cares to face a flying bullet.

Just back of you, continued Sam, coolly, "you will see a snare rope. Take that and bind your companion."

"I won't do it," dashed the Confederate. "Your life depends on it. Look at the revolvers."

The man did look, and the sight filled him with fury. He was of far better material than the bushwhacker element, and this discomfort had a sting for him which a baser man would not have felt. There was nothing for him to do except to obey, so, stifling a groan, he turned and picked up the rope.

Sam watched keenly. He knew both the soldiers were brave, quick-witted fellows, true Virginians, and they must be well guarded or they would yet work him mischief.

The man who was to be bound made no complaint, but stood still while the other went about the work. Twice Carrington had to hasten him, and only for his repeated cautions the lying would have been poorly done, but his repeated warning carried the work through, and one of the couple was out of mischief for the time being.

"Now, come here," said the victor, said to the other. "Put your hands above your head."

Both orders were obeyed.

"Now, I will bind you as you have bound your friend."

Saying, he laid down his weapon, advanced and took the cord. He did not at once use the revolvers, but the moment for which Sam had awaited, and with a tremendous sound he leaped upon his enemy.

The Unionist had expected as much, and was ready for it. He met the attack with his strong arms, and the two grappled like gladiators. Sam had not forgotten his wrestling tricks, and they quickly went down with the hands of the victor, and he proved full of pluck and skill and was not to be kept there.

A desperate struggle began, but it bade fair to soon be finished. Sam had committed great overwork, he had the legs of the first soldier unbound, for, as soon as the others grappled, he dashed into the outer room to give the alarm to the soldiers outside the house.

Even as he went, however, a new and startling sound broke upon his hearing. He hesitated, wavered, and then went to the window. Once more the scene on the lawn had changed, and the Confederates saw his comrades galloping in disorder, while, unaided, with them in a way far from pleasant, were numerous riders in Union blue.

One glance was enough to show the observer that the army was against the boys in gray. They had been sure of it, and though not perceptibly outnumbered, were getting severely flogged. The sabers of the new-comers were being used with terrible effect.

The sight excited the man to such a pitch that he managed to burst his bonds, after which he sprang from the window and came to a low horse, so intent on caring for himself that he uttered not a word, and his friend was fighting Cavalry Sam.

It was somewhat later that the latter, having worsted his opponent after a long struggle, recovered his revolver, and menaced him while he endeavored to recover his own breath.

"What next?" he soliloquized. "I thought, while we were rolling about, that I heard the sound of our comrades' guns, and a quiet now, and I reckon I was mistaken."

Even as he spoke, the door was suddenly pushed open, and a stout negro entered. Sam had started to raise his revolver, but as he plainly saw the hostility of the intruder he paused in irresolution.

The man looked strangely familiar.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A CAVALRY FIGHT.

The negro who had entered the room was of medium size, but stoutly built, and his face was sharp and shrewd beyond the average. His eyes took a roving glance, and the white teeth came to the front through the agency of a broad smile.

"Halloo! Massa Sam! how you do?" he asked.

"Hello, boy thunder!" exclaimed Carrington.

"Used to be Cleon, massa, but now my name is Edmund Sam. I'm a free American dandy, the way from Shenandoah to Pinet Sound."

"And I'm glad of it. Shake, old boy."

And, forgetful of the unbound prisoner, the two shook hands warmly. They had met under peculiar circumstances, after many years, but neither had forgotten the other. Edmund had always remembered the "Massa Sam," who had been so kind to him, and now only a boy, and the Union captain felt warmly toward one who had warned him in time of danger, and afterward shared in his flight through the swamp. Cordial, added, was their greeting, but Sam remembered the man under his knee.

"Where did you come from, Edmund? Do you see I've got a prisoner? Just bring over that string and let me tie him, will you?"

The negro obeyed, and the Confederate was soon beyond power of mischief.

"Your soldiers are outside, Massa Sam," Edmund then said.

"Are they?" "Well, I've lost the run of affairs about here of late, but it strikes me there has been some disturbance outside as well as in. What has been the trouble?" Edmund asked, and the captain got up and showed himself to his men without further delay, and his appearance at the door was hailed with cheers. The graycoats had been scattered, and those who had escaped and captured were speeding away as fast as their horses could carry them.

Ziah and his companions had made their appearance from the barn, so there was a general reunion in front of the house.

Well, and what adventures have befallen Sam and Ziah since they first came to the house; those of the main body of cavalrymen may be briefly given.

When the boys in gray came down on the place, two hundred strong, there were less than fifty Unionists to oppose them, so the latter were quickly put to flight, leaving their leader and half a dozen men behind.

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"Where are the confederates now?" Sam abruptly asked.

"Folks up in Dresser's woods," said Edmund, "with one of his old-time grins." "Spose they think sure we are in dar, an' they hab divided into two parties an' surrounded de whole wood."

"Yes, sub."

"Then, by my life, we'll up and at 'em again. There can't be more than seventy-five men in each party, and if the work is plain and the fire good, one half before the other suspects mischief."

Ziah uttered a suppressed cheer. He did not know enough about history to understand that Carrington was planning to move after the style of the first night, but he did recognize the feasibility of the idea.

Preparations for departure were at once made. The barn was fired in a score of places, and the firebrand took quick hold. Evidently, there would be nothing there to "invite the enemy to return."

As the blues could not be encumbered with prisoners in their dash, all the Confederates were left in the house.

Those who had partaken of the wine could not be awakened, and the Union surgeon stated that they were drugged, but not poisoned.

In fact, the owner of the house, before going to join Early's army, had poured a strong sleeping drug into each bottle, expecting that it would be the invaders who would drink and drink the stuff. Whether it was humbug or the possibility of his own friends would find and fall victims to it, that prevented him from putting in poison, is uncertain.

Carrington got his men in motion as soon as possible. If he succeeded in doing damage to the Confederates, it must be by prompt action, and, moreover, night was fast far away.

As they rode from the clearing, they looked back, and saw the barn wrapped in a fierce flame; then their faces were turned to the front, and they went on at a gallop.

Cavalry Sam was full of confidence. De-

spite certain misadventures of the day, he had been generally successful, and, by means of his quick wit, and good luck, he had crawled from under the most dangerous place.

He did not believe his successes had come to an end.

To ride at the head of his gallant little band, with Ziah and Edmund beside him, the reunion of the trio, after so many years, was calculated to inspire all with a desire to talk, but the leader did not forget that he was a soldier, and few unnecessary words were spoken.

Two miles were soon passed, for their pace was a rapid one, and then they neared Dresser's wood.

The Confederates might be seen at any moment, and as Sam did not care to engage them if they had consolidated, he halted his bluecoats in a thin wood, and began to give directions to Ziah regarding a scout.

At that moment a murrain ran along the Union line.

It reached the captain, and sent him to the edge of the trees.

Just beyond them, coming across the open field, which was only a few rods, three riders in gray were advancing at a walk.

It was one half of the divided force.

"By Jupiter!" cried Cavalry Sam, "they are walking right into our jaws!"

"Look out, an' him 'em," suggested Edmund, eagerly.

"Wait," said the captain, coolly. "Don't you see they are coming to us?"

He was right, and at that moment, and then gave a few hasty orders.

The bluecoats took positions assigned them, and all waited grimly.

The Confederates came on slowly, without a suspicion of danger, and entered the open field and entered the second wood.

Then, when they were fairly in the ambush, the Unionists arose on all sides. Methods used in the attack, and there was scarcely a man but found himself personally bested.

In the wood it was already dark, and this served to both the rebels; but they were not at all comprehending the situation, and then they began to fight as brave men will.

It was really a saber contest, and the clash of steel filled the trees with strange echoes. Slowly, but with a steady, and gallant fighting done; but the Confederates were taken at a disadvantage, and they fought against hope.

Many surrendered when hard pressed, for the enemy seemed more numerous than they really were, and those left to fight grew rapidly fewer in numbers.

At the end of ten minutes, it was over. The remaining men threw down their arms, and the battle was won.

Forty prisoners had been taken, and several dead were on the ground.

Captain Carrington was uncertain what to do.

It seemed his best course to hasten to camp with his prisoners; but the desire to attack the second party was so strong that he sent Ziah out to ascertain their position.

Ziah went, and returned, and he was no sooner than had been expected. He came to say that the rebels were advancing directly toward them, and not more than a mile distant at that moment.

Carrington was awake in a moment. He left ten men to guard the prisoners, and with only thirty-five advanced to meet the new force.

Ziah went to the way, and took the devoted handful to an advantageous position at the edge of a wood.

On the north lay an open field, and across this he believed the Confederates would come.

He had not miscalculated. Very few minutes had passed when they emerged from cover and then, breaking into a trot, began crossing the field.

Despite the faulty fall, but the Unionists could see plainly enough to tell that the rebels were twice their own number. Still they did not hesitate.

In a few minutes, a surprise counts as half of the battle.

At the proper moment, they too, broke cover, and with their horses going at a gallop, swept down on the larger force.

The surprise was seen, and the Confederates halted in confusion.

Of all things they had least expected an attack, and the bold dash of the handful made it seem as though they were strong in numbers.

There was no time to get the Confederates into order; and, when they were struck, it was as a shapeless mass. Orders were rapid-



ly given, but the first confusion could not be done away with. From the first, they fought a losing fight.

Still, Virginians fight well when they fight at all, and many of them presented a bold front.

Once more the clash of steel sounded sharply on the air, and the field was covered with horsemen who spurred here and there, as the battle raged on.

But, while the boys in gray fought against hope, Carrington's men were firm and orderly.

Every blow seemed to take effect; and, despite their inferiority of numbers, they began to drive the struggle further north.

Seeing just what was needed, Sam gathered a dozen men around him, and then made a dash into the center of the Confederate line. The plan succeeded, and they broke under the charge and fled in confusion.

Their leader shouted in vain for them to stand firm; they had faced the music long enough; and, in a confused body, they wheeled and fled back to the woods from which they had come.

They were followed for half a mile, but Sam and his superior officer, with a partial success, and he did not try to capture them.

Wheeling, he hurried his men back to where they had left their prisoners under guard; and, making a detour to secure those left at Eager's house, was soon on his way back to camp.

And so, three hours after dark, he reported to his superior officer, and exhibited three-score prisoners to prove the truth of his story.

The day's work gained fresh honors for the victors, and left no other blow; but it was only one of a series of sharp cavalry encounters which were taking place in the valley.

Sam's men were roving at will just then, but the Confederates were at all times ready to show their teeth.

#### CHAPTER XX.

##### AFTER THREE YEARS.

Several days of particular interest to the occurrence of anything of particular interest between the hostile armies.

Early had once attempted to surprise Sherry, with the forces of the latter lay near Fisher's Hill, but it had been a disastrous undertaking for the Confederates, and matters assumed a quiet aspect.

The Unionists had roved freely through the valley until satisfied with their work, and they thought Early so much weakened by repeated losses as to be harmless.

Such being the case, Captain Carrington acted on an idea he had long had in his mind.

He wished to look once more upon the scenes of his boyhood. True, not a building standing on his own land, but the hills and valleys were still there.

Again, he wished to visit the Warburtons. 'Ziah had once been there, and received a cordial welcome from Vida, Augusta not being at home.

The hand of war had spared their estate from devastation. The Confederates knew Augusta to be in warm sympathy with their cause; and Vida was known to be equally devoted to the other side.

Had they been men, this state of affairs would not have saved them; but, even in war, a true man feels a chivalrous regard for his old friends.

So, in the old home, the sisters lived with no protectors, except the half dozen negroes who had clung to their fortunes through all. These, the laws of both armies had made rather free about the place, but they could conscientiously offer little complaint.

Every Sam was anxious to see them after the long years of separation. He was not one to forget old ties, and for the daughters of Virginia he could never feel less than mainly respect and regard.

Perhaps he would not be welcomed if he went, but it was worth testing.

So he gained the necessary leave of absence, and rode away one morning accompanied by 'Ziah.

For a day or two, of all they visited the Carrington plantation.

It was a gloomy home-coming for the young master. Not even a calm stood on the broad estate.

The ruins of the old mansion lay as Jake Shelley's rude hand had left them. Desolation was everywhere, and it was not strange that Samuel Carrington's face grew sad.

"There was a time when you were a boy," then he was a boy. Then all was peace and prosperity.

The fields bore abundant crops and the well-tended negroes sang at their work as gray-haired Roger Carrington sat on the piazza and watched them in languid comfort. Well loved had he been by all, it is agreed, by Cavalry Sam.

"While he sat thus, probably the boy was in the places with 'Ziah Strout, still hunting some game, or listening to a thrilling story by the camp-fire, or the whispering trees.

What a change the war had brought! How long the captain reflected he never knew, for 'Ziah, after keeping silence for awhile, deemed it best to arouse him from his day-dream thoughts.

Sam started, showed more animation, and then they moved on toward Warburton's.

Their road was the same Sam had traveled the day when Augusta told him of the firings on Fort Sumter, but that, too, had changed. An army had passed along, and it had been widened to allow the passage of their guns—it scarcely seemed like the same place.

As they broke through the last wood upon the Warburton estate, a far different view was given them.

The high ground the place with a gentle hand. The buildings were undisturbed. Even the fields, though less cared for, were familiar in every way.

They came to the front of the mansion. "No one was visible, but Sam's knock soon brought a stout negro to the door. She started, recognizing him at once, and looked alarmed, but he put out his hand with a smile.

"How do you do, Aunt Molly," he said. "Bress the Lord, Massa Sam; am it you, for sure? Dis nigger nebber again expected to see you smile."

"Strange things happen, auntie, and have come back to you after many years."

"I so glad to see you, bress the Lord, I is; but ain't you a puttin' your head in de lion's mouth?"

"How so?"

"Jake Shelley's gang was here only last night."

"They had better keep away," said Sam, frowning. "Some day I'll get after that wretch and make him bow. Are the ladies in, auntie?"

"Boil ob dem, sah."

"Well you see them if they want to see Sam Carrington once more?"

"I will, 'o' sure."

Aunt Molly retired, but soon reappeared to say that the ladies would be pleased to see Captain Samuel Carrington.

"Which of them bade you utter that long name?" he asked.

"Miss 'Gusta, sah."

"Ah."

Sam smiled slightly, and then glanced at 'Ziah.

"I'll keep Aunt Molly company in the kitchen," said the girl, but "T'won't be the fast time I've been there."

"Bress you, Massa 'Ziah, no," added the negroes.

Cavalry Sam entered. Declining Aunt Molly's invitation, Cavalry Sam went straight to the old, familiar room, where he had so often been in the past. He rapped. A voice bade him enter, and he passed within.

The room Warburton were there. They were both standing, and one of them came forward impetuously and grasped his hand.

It was Vida, but scarcely the Vida of the old epoch. Three years had developed the picture of a girl into a magnificent woman—one so royally beautiful that the visitor was amazed; and in her face and eyes were all of the old lights. She was the same as of old.

"Oh, Sam! I am so glad to see you!" she declared, as she caught his hand. "It brings back the old days so!"

"I am glad to see you, Vida," said the girl, as a calm voice, "am also glad to see Captain Carrington."

It was Augusta who spoke, and she came forward with graceful dignity and held out her hand, as though there was no political question between them.

She had changed, but little. He saw the same calm, beautiful and queenly girl who had told him of the news from Sumter.

He held both their hands, but looked at Augusta.

"I am not Captain Carrington; I am Sam," he said, a smile crossing his bronzed face. "The war journals say you are a captain and a general. It reminds me of the old days when you were 'Mad Sam' to hear them tell of your dashing ways. No wonder the North is proud of you, and calls you 'Cavalry Sam.' And your legions on such devastating raids."

There was a tinge of sarcasm and bitter-

ness in her voice, which took off any flavor of flattery which might be imagined, and Vida hastened to say:

"For shame, Augusta; do not begin to quarrel so soon."

"I am sure there will be no quarreling," said the soldier, "for I have come only as 'Sam.'"

Having thus preface their interview, they seated themselves, and an animated conversation began.

Augusta said no bitter words; and under the spell of the moment all three forgot that the years had rolled on and left their youth far away forever the old South.

The gallant captain had not seen a happier moment for years. He had met handsome women when in Paris, but, after all now were equal to those of the Old Dominion. He was a loyal man in his devotion to his state women, whatever Augusta might think of his political heresies.

Vida surprised him most of all. She had seemed like a child when he went away three years before; but time had made her a woman, gloriously beautiful, with a kindly look in her dusky eyes. He thought of the letter of welcome she had sent him, and wondered if she remembered it as well; but the memory of her warm greeting was a sufficient proof that she had not grown cold toward him.

Conversation drifted to national affairs.

"The war will soon end," said Augusta, sadly.

"And then I shall return to the old plantation," the captain answered, with a sigh.

"Can you again assume the ways of a Virginian?"

"I have never abandoned them. I am all Virginian at heart, and there is no place like home."

"I fear we shall never settle back into the old, pleasant life. It is too much to expect that Vida and I will be here with you on our right, and Alfred Penrock on the left, as in the days of yore."

"Still, I trust that it may be so. Dear old Alfred, how I would like a long chat with him."

"He makes a gallant soldier."

"He is a Penrock," answered Sam, proudly, "and if he had not so long been a staff officer he would be even more than a colonel to-day."

"You might have been as much, to-day, if you had gone with the South, Sam."

"Perhaps I might have been a clod," he answered, "but I always possessed the Southerners' shatter a limb for me at Malvern Hills; they might have done worse had I given them a chance."

"Ah! you are an irreclaimable traitor," said Augusta, with a lightness which surprised Sam.

#### CHAPTER XXI.

##### AN UNPLEASANT INTERRUPTION.

Captain Carrington was surprised and delighted at the friendly ways of the sisters, especially as he had known Augusta to be so warm a sympathizer with the South. He remembered the reproaches she had heaped upon him when first he announced his intention of going with the North, and now, with a hostile army laying waste to the fair valley of the Shenandoah, she was as though she sought to be more bitter than usual.

Had he had time for reflection, he might perhaps have remembered the advice given a boy by his aged father:

"Don't try to understand a sex that don't understand themselves."

But Sam was not in a cynical mood. Before the smiles of the ladies he was happy. Bright eyes had always possessed the strong attraction for him, and theirs were unsurpassed. He was enjoying a feast of the head and heart.

Time glided rapidly away. Noon came and passed, and Sam once more sat at the table with the Misses Warburton as of yore.

'Ziah had been invited to join the repast, but had already gorged himself with Aunt Molly's black-bread and chicken.

And said a few rather graceful things, and then subsided into his corner in the kitchen.

Sam and the sisters went over the events of their lives during the last three years more fully.

Both Augusta and Vida had tried the life of hospital nurses in the past, but the former had soon found it dreary, and Vida went to Washington to do what she could for the Union, some thick-headed official had suspected her good faith, because she was from the South, and she had been sent back to the Confederate lines. It was her first and last attempt.

There were no long pauses in the conversation; they had enough to talk about to last for a long time, and Sam was highly gratified at the state of affairs. Very soon, unless the signs of the times were deceptive, the war would be brought to an end, and then he hoped to rebuild on the old estate, and resume his friendly association with such of his old friends as had survived the struggle.

As clouds form on a sunny sky, so this pleasant visit was interrupted.

Aunt Molly, from the moment that she saw Sam, was filled with a fear that harm would come to him brought to an end, and then he hoped to rebuild on the old estate, and resume his friendly association with such of his old friends as had survived the struggle.

So, while the others visited, she watched for breakers ahead, and breakers appeared all too soon.

From out a wood to the rear of the house came a score of men who were not long in recognizing. They were ragged, ill-favored fellows, dressed in ordinary clothing, but all were armed, and their manner was lawless and arrogant.

"Ziah had gone in to talk with Sam and the ladies, and all were startled when Aunt Molly abruptly entered the room.

"Oh! de good Lord!" she gasped, breathlessly. "You must do something 'n' dis hurry, an' you will be killed, 'fo' sure!"

Vida and Augusta turned pale, but the captain, without stirring, tersely asked:

"Who is coming?"

"It am Jake Shelley an' his gang. Oh! de good Lord, Massa Sam, dey will kill you."

"I reckon not," said he, coolly. "Where are they?"

"Dey are comin' dat-way. Oh! mercy on us, Massa Sam—"

He waited to hear no more, but strode to where he could view the eastern field.

There the she-langs were a high-looking fellows were approaching the house with Jake Shelley striding at their head.

"Bushwhackers!" said Ziah, calmly.

"You must hide," said Augusta, her fair face all pale with alarm. "You are a fighting man on the place, and you cannot run them alone. We will conceal you in the attic and get them away as soon as possible. They will not remain long."

"Don't fool!" said Carrington, calmly. "They do not suspect we are here, and you have more to fear than we. Rather than have trouble, we will keep out of sight, and let nothing would please me more than to get a chance at Jake Shelley. I have not forgotten how he once hunted me with bloodhounds."

"Pay the debt some other time, and when the time is in your favor, I will add, quickly. "For now, go to the attic, and do not leave it under any consideration. These bushwhacker gangs often come here, but we know how to manage them. We have letters of protection from numerous Southern leaders, and they will not dare molest us. Come with me, both of you, and I will show you that we are prepared for emergencies."

"Just as you say," said Sam, smiling. "We will hide; but if those fellows get unrunny you may expect us to rally forth in our might and annihilate them."

He was talking for effect, for, really, he had grave fears in the case. Jake Shelley was lawless and brutal enough to commit any lawless deed, regardless of Juba Early, Jefferson Davis or the whole Southern Confederacy; and it was just as probable that harm would come of his visit, it was just as probable that it would result in a fight which would go hard for him and all his friends.

Vida quickly led the way to the attic. Apparently, the long space was all in one unfinished room, but Sam, who had played there many a day in his boyhood, noticed that it seemed to be divided into three.

The girl led the way to the rear end. To all appearances, there was only a blank wall there, composed of lathing and mortar, but she touched a hidden spring and a portion of the wall or of the door receded, revealing a small room inside.

"Enter!" she said, quickly. "You will find accommodations there, and means of securing them. Now, I implore you, remain quiet until you hear me ring the bell at this entrance. That, and that alone, will be the signal that all is safe. Until then, you must stay inside and make no sound. Do you understand?"

"You can depend on us; only, if there is

actual trouble, you must let us know. Two determined men can do a good deal against such a crowd as Shelley's gang. There, go, for Augusta will want you."

She extended her hand, impulsively, it lingered a moment within his own, and then she went away. Long after she was at the top of the stairs, she saw the secret door closed and began to breathe easier.

"You are clever, Cavalry Sam," said the scout. "You got her away without actually bindin' yourself with a promise."

"Do you suppose I will stay in here like a sneak and allow Shelley to work his vicious plans—if victims they are? No, I shall keep a close watch, and I can only get out by sail in."

"Of course, I had to outwarily yield to the ladies, to save them unnecessary worry, but we will keep ourselves well informed as to what is going on."

"Et only your slayers was hyer now, what a harvest they could reap."

"We will have Jake Shelley some day."

They locked the secret room carefully. It was a small, square room, only one acquainted with the attic would find the entrance; but, though the room was scarcely six feet wide, the wall was thick and bullet proof and the door was hung and provided with a stout lock.

This refuge had been planned by the sisters and made under their directions by their slaves, and more than once it had done good service in the past.

Augusta, after being left alone, seemed to lose all composure. She sank into a chair and pressed her hands over her heart, and her fair face was almost colorless.

"Merciful Heaven!" she said, "what will happen to us now? Jake Shelley has sworn to apply the torch to our house, and if Sam interferes he will be murdered. It may even be that Shelley knows of his presence here, and is coming because of that."

"Oh! what can we do? He must be saved, for—I love him!"

Her head dropped on her hand, and she sat mute and motionless, her pride and strength at a loss.

Brave enough she could be for herself, but she feared for Sam.

Despite the natural gulf between them, she carried his image in her heart, though at the moment she was a pale young woman.

Half an hour before, sitting near, and listening to his manly voice, she had hoped the war would soon end, she scarcely cared to know what it brought Sam Carrington back to the Shenandoah Valley.

The entrance of Vida aroused her from reflection, and she turned a pallid face to her younger sister.

"Mercy! said the latter, whose face had suddenly grown full of color. "Now, pale you are! You must rally, Augusta. The bushwhackers are at our door, and we cannot play the timid girl. Only cunning work can save us from the clutches of these villains."

"I shall be stronger in my moment," said Augusta, striving to regain her composure. "I would give much for a sight of Colonel Peurock now, or for any force of regular Confederate soldiers," said Vida, mutely.

"Can't we send for aid?" was the quick inquiry.

"I was thinking of that, but it is too late. Besides, fear did not keep away. Come, let us go and meet Jacob Shelley."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### A SURPRISE FOR JACOB.

Jake Shelley and his men had reached the house, and were taking a survey of the premises.

Of late they had received some wholesome lessons from the invading army, and when they moved it was with a degree of caution. The band had once numbered six-score, but the eighteen men who were now at the Warburton house comprised all that was left of the original band.

More despicable wretches did not exist in Virginia, and Shelley had twice been warned by General Early that trouble would come to him unless he changed his mode of warfare.

In the carrying out of his plans for plunder he had a bad habit of forgetting whether his victims were loyal or disloyal, and the experience of the day followed his head cared nothing so long as they offered a good booty.

If peace had been in the Old Dominion, most of them would be in jail; they must make lay while the sun shone.

Now, he had knocked at the door, and a parley with Aunt Molly, and then Vida came forward with an inquiring look on her face. She was perfectly calm outwardly, and the vicious eyes of the bushwhacker brightened

with admiration at sight of her handsome face.

"Evenin', marm, evenin'," he said, pulling off his battered hat and sweeping one foot back with what he meant for a graceful greeting. "Hope I see you wal, marm."

"Quite well, Mr. Shelley," was the steady reply. "I see you are in the field again."

"Yaas, we are that; in fact, we are here still nowadays. The invaders are on our side, an' it behevies me as a leader o' a band o' Virginians ter be up an' doin'."

"You can't do any more than we will give a little food to you and your men."

"Oh, we ain't pressed fur time jest now. In fact, we intended to stop. Much obliged warior, we want to stop. Hyer, you go in an' take a nap. I feel like easin' up a bit on my yoke."

Although this was something not included in her invitation, Vida accepted the inevitable with what grace she could, and stepped aside for Shelley to enter.

He waited for no ceremony, but strode straight to where Augusta was trying to regain her composure.

She heard his heavy footsteps, started, and grew pale again; but the very nearness of the danger nerved her suddenly, and she turned to him face when he entered.

He had once again come to the house. His heavy form went down on the sofa, and his dilapidated boots came to the same level.

There was a malicious pleasure in all he did. Once, he had been a conqueror, and on the plantation, but he had never been allowed in the mansion; while, at a later day, he had been discharged and warned to keep away.

Now, he had come as a conqueror, he was in the places once held as too sacred for him to tread, and with his brute form extended on the sofa he was enjoying the triumph of a low and vulgar pleasure.

"Trot out some wine, will you, gals?" he familiarly and coarsely said.

"There is not a particle of any kind of stimulant in the house," Vida calmly said. "You can offer nothing except food."

"No liquor? Thunder! If of some one should come along and demand it!"

"In that case, we should show them our letters of protection from General Early and others, and tell them to go their way," was the quiet reply.

"Early he blowed. He don't count fur much at the present time. His army has come to smash, an' he has all he can do to protect himself, an' he ain't much of a man anyway. If he had been, he n' kept the army from t'arin' the Shenandoah all ter pieces."

"You must remember he was strongly outnumbered," said Augusta, who had not forgotten that the general had done much for her own and Vida's safety.

The conversation led the Russian to some fresh extravagances, and he amused on General Early and Lee, Jefferson Davis and the whole body of Southern leaders, and with each unreasoning attack, worked himself into additional rage.

"I don't believe but what you have vine in the house," he said again. "I'm goin' ter look. Reckon your memories are gettin' poor, but the matter kin soon be settled. Lead the way to the cellar."

The ladies grew alarmed and began to remonstrate, and then, when he would not listen, showed the letter from General Early, but he hung it contemptuously aside.

"None o' you tinkers, no, no, pretty one," he rudely said. "No tricks on old travelers. Juba Early ain't o' any more account to-day than Jacob Shelley, an' I'm jest as good as dead in this house fer see what kin be found fur the good o' the Confederate army."

Augusta and Vida remonstrated in vain. Appeals and warnings were alike unheeded. Shelley had come to the house with a fixed purpose, and he was not to be turned aside.

If he did not change his plans, the ladies would be lucky indeed if they did not meet with a serious accident before he was through. He hated them all because they were wealthy and above him in the social scale, and he intended to do all in his power to annoy them before he left.

He was now contemplating the application of a fire-brand to the noble old building.

He pushed past the girls and went on toward the cellar. They dared not oppose him further, but as his heavy steps sounded on the stairs, stood together and asked simultaneously:



"What shall we do?"

It was a question not easily answered, for they seemed utterly helpless. Against Shelley's name, they felt, possibly, was a successful war by some cunning trick, but with so many men outside, resistance was out of the question.

Meanwhile, Shelley went on and began prowling about the cellar. He found everything except what he wanted, and it soon began to look as though the cellar, at least, contained no wine.

It was thus hanging barrels and boxes about in a vicious sort of a way, when he came upon a drygoods case which was bottom up. He turned it over, and he was not tight enough to hold any kind of liquid, and he whirled it aside out of simple mischief.

What followed rather surprised him though.

The removal of the case did not leave an empty space underneath; on the contrary, it revealed some sort of a dark object which, just then, looked not unlike a toad under a microscope, and Shelley, poorly aided by a violent jump, which he vigorously decided by a clearer vision whether the thing was really a man, as it looked to be, or—

The matter was quickly decided. The dark object sprang up like a flash, and Shelley, with barely time enough to discover that it was a stout negro, when it bounded forward with lowered head and a quickness the bushwhacker could not avoid.

Suddenly in the stomach the hard head struck him, and he went headlong backward, knocking over a barrel and plunging one elbow into a pailful of water which looked none the less as if it were wine.

Very little life was left in Jacob's carcass for the time being, and he could only lay and groan in a most dismal fashion. Just then, he neither knew nor cared what had happened; he was too much occupied in the pain which the heavy blow had left behind it.

Not so the man who had felled him. One moment a broad smile widened his fat face; then he set the fallen lamp on a box, and produced a quantity of stout cords from his pocket.

"Hiyah!" he said. "I guess I's done won de first round in de prize fight. I'll be up dis prison serpent right away. We uns don't want no sech white trash round hyer."

Surfing the action to the word, his nimble fingers quickly applied the cord to Shelley's wrists and ankles. The ruffian struggled somewhat, but his efforts were vague and useless, and in the space of five minutes the negro had him firmly secured.

He then retreated a few paces.

"Golly!" he muttered, "I dunno, but I've spilled de fat in de fire by doin' dis; but ob course, I couldn't let de ole varmint wring me neck as he would be doin' if I hadn't. Hi! Jake Shelley, mebbe you won't crack de otheer's whip round my legs agin dis week."

The speaker reflected for a moment and then went up the stairs. The door was closed, but it yielded to his touch. He passed through and confronted Augusta and Vida.

"Clean!" they exclaimed, together.

"De used to be de best of de bunch. I's now Edmund Smith, private valint to Colonel Ludenwall."

The negro, who was indeed our old friend, found himself most warmly greeted, but he seemed to have no other business than to look anxiously around the hall.

"Here!" answered a voice, and the captain came through the open door, closely followed by the scout.

His appearance alarmed the Misses Warburton, and they besought him to return to his room, but Edmund also crowded forward for a share of attention.

"Wait a bit, Massa Sam; I's got a case ob yaller fever in de cellar an' I don't know what to do wid it."

"In order words, Jake Shelley. He intruded on my personal property, and I had to tie him up for safe keepin'."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### CAGED TIGERS.

Edmund made his announcement nonchalantly, but it fell on his hearers with startling force. They saw further than he, and in this pretty way that a prolonged absence on Shelley's part would be investigated by his men. This would of course result in a discovery of the facts of the case, and then the wrath of the bushwhackers would go to fever heat.

Every one except Cavalry Sam uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"How come you in the house?" he asked. "I troffed over to see de ole place, an' when I seed de fellers out front, I slipped into de cellar by de back window. Jest den, down come dat nosin' Jake Shelley. I didn't want no row wid him, an' I laid under a barrel, but he tipped it over, an' I had ter lay him out ter save my own bacon."

The last words were said apologetically, for he saw that they were not pleased with his story, but even then 'Ziah shook his head gloomily.

"You've got us inter a pretty pickle, you black imp!"

"Nothin' can save us now," said Augusta.

"Wait," said Sam, coolly. "We must put our wits at work and save ourselves. Otherwise, as you say, we are in a quicksand. Once let the bushwhackers suspect Shelley has met with misfortune and they will tear the house down over our heads."

"Fore de Lord, I didn't intend ter do dat, but I'm in a fix, an' I'm in real distress."

"Don't you lament, my colored friend, but save your muscle for a more pressing emergency. Has any one here a plan to offer?"

"Can't we send for help?" said Vida.

"Yes, yes," added Augusta, "send Cleon to General Early, or to— to your friends, captain."

And have them arrive only to find the house burned to the ground. That would be the only result. I have an idea working in my mind; let me perfect it."

Sam thought of the wall, and the others felt talking in subdued voices. Edmund was shown the dilemma into which he had plunged them by capturing Shelley, but they could not very well blame him. Still, the situation was serious. The bushwhackers might at any minute knock at the door to inquire for their leader, and then the magazine would explode, as it were.

"I have the idea," he said.

"What is it?" Augusta quickly asked.

"One which suspends our chances by a hair, as you say; a resort so desperate that 'an' Sam 'n' I will be responsible."

"Name it, Sam, name it," said 'Ziah.

"We must get the other bushwhackers into the cellar."

"How, captain, and how can we do it?"

"Simply by informing them that Shelley is there, and that he wants them to enter and help drink the wine he had found there."

'Ziah shook his head.

"It won't work."

"Why not?"

"They won't walk inter any sech trap as that."

"Perhaps not, but I think they will. They do not suspect there is an enemy near, or that Shelley has run against a snag, and nobody is ever better than the wine. They would be anything strange for the whole gang to go down when invited to a free drink?"

There was reason in his argument, but it took some time to fully persuade his companions.

This being done, they moved promptly. Edmund was directed to slip out of the house by the rear, regain the horse he had left at the stable, and then to be sent to the Union camp, and the first step was taken in the plan when the negro went away as indicated.

He gained the wood undiscovered, and there was no doubt but that he would ride as fast as his horse could go.

"Now," said Cavalry Sam, coolly, "you had better send out a good dinner to the outside bushwhackers, but let 'em keep them quiet than anything else in the world."

This idea was also acted upon, and as Aunt Molly had the meal already prepared, the bushwhackers were soon busy in getting outside of it.

Sam remembered the drugged wine at the Lager house, and would have given them a dose of the same stuff, but, unluckily, there was not a drop in the house.

An hour passed, and Edmund was believed to be at the Union camp. Another such interval of guard and waiting came.

But the bushwhackers were growing uneasy. Night was not far away, and they had tired of their position on the bare piazza.

They always obeyed Shelley, but it looked just like as though he was monopolizing all the good things of life.

Finally, one of them knocked at the door. Aunt Molly, who was displaying remarkable courage, answered the summons.

The man wanted to know why Shelley tarried so long.

She retired to the sitting-room, and then returned to tell the man that Shelley would be ready to move in just half an hour.

The bushwhacker growled disconsolately, but went sullenly back to his comrades, and another hour began.

The midnight urged Sam and 'Ziah to save themselves by flight, which they could easily do, but they were not so craven as that.

They very well knew that when Shelley's misfortune was known, nothing could save the mansion from destruction, and the girls would probably fare no better.

When the girls were urged to flee, they refused to leave their home. They had letters of protection from prominent Southerners, and they would not be driven away.

Augusta frequently looked at Carrington with admiring eyes. How noble he had grown since the old days.

Such a man was her dear ideal of all that was grand and manly, and more than ever she wished he had taken sides with the South.

Still—well, it was merely a matter of opinion, and she could not feel harshly toward him if he did wear the army blue of the invaders.

The discontent among the bushwhackers began to increase, and Carrington plainly saw that their last resort must be tried. He said his plans for the grand attempt, but, as every moment counted, delayed as long as possible.

Another half hour ought to bring the boys in sight.

Other events were destined to occur first.

Cavalry Sam watched with a keen scrutiny, and when he saw that the iron was hot, he struck.

The discontent of the bushwhackers had grown to a sullen fury, and he knew they would wait no longer, while further excuse would only serve to awaken their suspicion that something was wrong.

One more minute Molly went to the door, called one of the men, and in a voice remarkable for its steadiness, told them that Shelley had just awakened from a brief sleep, and that he was so late, and so late, and that they would depart at once.

First, however, each and every man could have a drink of old wine by stepping down into the cellar.

"Will you come, chillun?" the negress asked.

Would they? The question was unnecessary.

Their ugly mood vanished at once, and they made a rush into the house.

"Dar's de doah," continued Aunt Molly, "an' Massa Shelley is already down dar. Go right down an' have yourselves."

Pushing each other in their eagerness, the rough fellows went down—every man of them.

The door was firmly secured, and they were in the trap.

Of course they could not long be held, for, though Sam and 'Ziah had taken the precaution to remove Shelley to the upper part of the cellar, where he could be seen as a shield, if need be, the cheat would soon be discovered, and the bushwhackers were sharp enough to dig out.

The black rough which Edmund had entered the cellar, was only a small opening to admit the light, and even that had been walled up by the Unionists while they waited.

A brief and ominous silence followed the caging of the gang. The little group above was strangely calm.

The men were soldiers and accustomed to danger, but in this emergency even Augusta and Vida had rallied and were showing their heritage of courage.

"Thar will be a squal pooty soon," said 'Ziah, grimly.

"De bushwhackers ain't in sight," said Aunt Molly, returning after a pilgrimage to the front door.

"It is as though we were standing on a volcano," said Vida with a little shiver.

"Let us hope that, however much the internal elements may froth and foam, they will not succeed in getting out of the crater," said Sam, with a lightness he did not feel.

"I believe they went in after the cray-thair," added 'Ziah, willing to help in a good cause.

"That's a bad pun; one we would never comprehend if we didn't know what they did go after. Don't try again, 'Ziah."

"Hark!" said Augusta.

A murmur of voices came from below,

and then quick footsteps were heard on the cellar stairs.

A hand was laid on the door-latch, and a movement made to push it open. It remained closed, and a cur followed.

Then came a vigorous push and another hum of voices. They could hear nothing, but they knew the stairway was full of men, and that the volcano was beginning to heat.

A vigorous pounding sounded at the door, but the little party remained silent. "Ziah proved his courage by calmly taking a chew of Aunt Molly went hurriedly to the front door.

The boys in blue were not in sight.

Twice the bushwhackers knocked at the door, and then, when they failed to get an answer, deep curses began to roll through their ranks.

Whether they yet suspected a trap was uncertain, but it was pretty sure that they intended to get out without delay.

A heavy pressure was brought to bear on the door, and it cracked on its hinges; but, beside the original bolts, it had been so strengthened by barricading that it did not move.

Of course the bushwhackers' next move was to shout vigorously, but even that did them no good.

The little garrison kept quiet, sorely stirring except when Aunt Molly trotted to the door to look for the Union troops that did not come.

A brief lull followed below, and then came a new sound. It was a sharper pounding, indicating that the door had been obtained with which they intended to demolish the door panels.

Sam and Ziah were ready for this move. Silently, and with a hammer and some spikes lay close at hand, and as secrecy was no longer of use, they began to nail the boards across the door.

Another lull came in the bushwhackers' stirring, except when they thought they had suspected the state of affairs; they broke into yells and curses which were blood-curdling.

The volcano was at last in full motion, and we were to the party above if it broke loose.

The boys in blue were still invisible!

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### FICKLE FORTUNE.

Matters soon went from bad to worse in the cellar. The bushwhackers had found out two things for certain.

First, that there was no wine in the place, the second that Jake Shelby was not there.

These two points being clear, and the door already strong, the little party would have been stupid indeed had they not perceived that they were in a trap.

As this conviction dawned upon them, they gave their rage full play. Their curses and useless yells made the women shiver in the hall above, and only that the door had been so tightly nailed they would soon have dashed it entirely away, and rushed up to secure bloody revenge.

At the little party above "held the fort" for the time, and Cavalry Sam actually laughed as he heard them howl—nor because he regarded the matter in a joking light, but because the courage of the sisters must be sustained as long as possible.

"They begin to ease off," said the scout, and, as the yells suddenly subsided, "Can it be they have given up?" asked Vid.

"Not much. They are on the Injinn track now. A r-d-ki is always the most dangerous when he is still, an' you kin bet them varmints are plottin' mischief."

"It will take they are already digging out of the cellar."

"It'll take 'em half an hour ter do it, Miss Vid."

"And when they get out we have our weapons ready for use," added Sam.

"De Unioners ain't in sight yet," announced Aunt Molly, as she trotted back from the door.

Captain Carrington frowned.

Enough time had elapsed to bring aid, if all had gone well, and he began to fear that the negro had failed in his mission, or else that no men had been granted to answer the call.

At that moment, however, all their attention was drawn to the bushwhackers.

The floor at the further end of the hall began to creak and tremble in a suggestive way.

"Sam! said Sam, "is that their game?"

"I never thought of that," muttered Ziah.

"We must think of it now. Come, we will add your weight to the strength of the attached point, and try to prevent a breach."

They did as he said; the door was cracked and trembled under their feet, they did not yield to any great extent, and the attempt was finally abandoned.

Silence once more reigned in the cellar.

Some time passed, but Sam and Ziah were continually on the alert.

They moved around from window to window, expecting every moment to see an enemy making a dash for the foundation of the mansion; but ten minutes went on without giving them any clew to the movements of the bushwhackers.

Really, the latter had more to work against than they suspected.

"The mansion had been well built, the floor was firm, and the rocks which composed the sides of the cellar were held together by cement, which was not easily moved.

All these things they had found to baffle them; but they had gained an idea not thought of by the Union men above.

When their unreasoning fury had exhausted itself, they set about the work of escape systematically.

In their hands were keen, strong knives, and with these they proposed to carve their way to victory.

The barrels and boxes were brought into the cellar, and set about the door, and then, in half a dozen different places, they began the work of cutting through. Keen as their knives were, this was not easy, for the boards were old and well-seasoned; but they worked diligently, and gained little by their efforts.

This explains why they were so silent, and proves that Ziah's assertion that silence is often more to be dreaded than a good deal of noise.

One of the cutters went through the first layer of boards, and a murmur arose from the men as they cast down a section three feet long and a foot wide. In the course of time, this beginning could be continued so that they could crawl through.

Meanwhile, matters suddenly assumed an unexpected phase up stairs.

Carrington, going to the front door to see if the boys were in sight, saw altogether a different sight.

Directly in front of the piazza, two score of Confederate cavalry were gathered in line, their gray uniforms presenting a most unbecome appearance, and nearer yet was an officer in gray.

This man had just been on the point of knocking at the door, when it was abruptly opened by Sam, and the two stood face to face, near that they could have shaken hands.

Of the two, the Confederate was the least surprised.

He drew his revolver before advancing to the door, and only one movement was required to bring it to the level of Sam's breast, while at the same time he sternly said:

"One movement and yondie! Yield yourself as my prisoner."

It was a painful and humiliating situation, but the man who kicks against a loaded revolver under such circumstances is mad.

Sam drew up all his limbs and got on his hands and knees, and then, as he lay on his side, he seemed sure to go against his friends any way now, he dashed aside all dignity, and curtly said:

"Surrender it is. Drive on your ambulance!"

Two or three men had advanced without orders at sight of the Union captain, and to the surprise of the Confederates, they were the first to knock on the door, and then, as they entered, they finally walked back to where Sam was being bound to a horse.

"This is inside?" he asked.

"General!" he said, and about five hundred cavalry," was the prompt reply.

The Southerner made an impatient gesture.

"I am not a child, and you will lose nothing by it," he said, speaking more moderately than could be expected. "There are, of course, more Unionists. How many?"

Before Sam could answer, a cry arose from one of the men in the rear, and all looked around.

Out from the northwestern wood a hundred boys in blue were coming at a hard gallop, their faces toward the house, and a wild cry was heard leading the way.

Union aid was coming, in time, doubtless, to thwart the bushwhackers, but too late to save Cavalry Sam.

The Confederate leader saw himself outnumbered, and one leap took him to the saddle. Then, one brief command

was uttered, the boys in gray gave a shout, which was answered from the blues, and away went the smaller force with Captain Carrington in their midst.

They were not pursued. The commander of the rescue party knew the Confederates had just arrived there, and, as he saw nothing of Sam, he concluded to let them alone and devote his attention to the work on which he had been dispatched.

Meanwhile, Sam Carrington was taken on a rough ride of some fifteen miles. He knew the road well and was aware that he was being taken directly to General Early's camp, but he asked no questions. Of all the misdeeds of his life that was the most entangling.

To be captured at such a time was indeed mortifying, and it was no wonder he relapsed into silence and asked no questions.

It was after dark when the Confederate lines were reached, but, after a little delay, Sam was taken to General Early's tent. It was not the first time the captain had seen the square, bearded face, but he was not so well known to soldiers as the general, and no one recognized him until his name was pronounced.

He did not hesitate to give it. He had no intention of sulking any further, and every question asked by Early was promptly answered. He told his name, whereupon there was a little stir among the subordinate officers, and then, as "Cavalry Sam" to their sorrow; and he told, too, of his visit to the Warbenton house, of the arrival of Shelby's bushwhackers and their lawless course.

At this point, Early frowned.

"This fellow must be given a lesson," he sternly said, "and a severe one at that. This is not his first offense, and I will show him that I do not give protection papers to lawless men."

The prisoner finished his story, and then Early added:

"Well, sir, I sincerely hope your friends have at this time caught the whole lot of Shelby's men, where they cannot escape; but my present business is with you. My scouts tell me that the Northern army has encamped on the eastern side of Cedar Creek."

"Pardon me, general," was the respectful answer, "but I cannot give any information in regard to General Sheridan's army."

"Well, well, have it your own way; it is not of my business. You are, of course, retained as a prisoner, but it is likely an exchange will soon be effected. One so noted as 'Cavalry Sam' ought to bring a good price," the general added, with a faint smile.

At that moment, an officer who had at first been in the rear of the tent, pushed forward and stood near Early. He was a manly, handsome fellow, and, though still young, wore the uniform of a Confederate colonel.

Carrington saw him and started.

"Alfred Penrock?" he could not avoid exclaiming.

Every gaze was fixed upon the colonel, who first bowed and then looked at General Early.

"Do you know the prisoner?" the latter asked.

"He was once my schoolmate, general," Penrock answered, his voice husky from emotion.

"Cloud crossed the face of his superior officer."

"So! so!" murmured the general; "such is the fate of war. Parted, perhaps, for years, you meet thus strangely. Here is a chance for mortifying, were that a soldier's business, but it is not."

He hesitated for a moment and then ordered the prisoner removed. This done he beckoned to Penrock.

"Perhaps you would like to have an interview with this old acquaintance," he said.

"I would, indeed, general."

"Go, then, and talk with him."

Thus it was that a few minutes later, Alfred came to the prison tent of his childhood friend and they met again after long years—years made doubly long by war and trouble.

The grim guard paced in front of the tent but they did not heed him. Their hands met in an earnest clasp.

"Sam!"

"Alfred!"

The names came but had used in the old days, but, to them, time had made no change in their feelings, even though they fought under rival flags.

Alfred did not wait until they began to talk as only old friends, long separated, can talk.



but it was a meeting such as few men have. No bitterness hovered over it, only each believed himself in the right, and Penrock was full of sorrow that Carrington should have fought under the Northern flag only to be, that evening, a fast prisoner.

Their conversation was long and earnest, and though it all neither spoke a bitter or reproving word, neither tried to show that he was right and his companion wrong. The die had been cast three years before; one was fated to fight in blue and the other in gray, but that had not destroyed their friendship, and never would.

Of the state of the war they talked freely, though without undue confidence, and Penrock freely admitted that the end would probably come soon in the Shenandoah Valley at least.

They parted, at last, with a warm clasp of hands, and Colonel Penrock went away to seek Early. Modestly, but earnestly, he requested that if any exchange of prisoners was made, the case of Captain Carrington would be favorably considered, and the Confederate general hesitated a moment and he would consider the request.

Cavalry Sam was left alone in his prison tent. He had much of which to think, and his mind was not altogether in regard to the Misses Warburton, but he trusted that all was well there, and there did not seem to be any reason why the rescue party brought by Edmund should not have been completely absorbed by Shelby and his band.

As for himself, Sam was a prisoner for the first time in his army experience; but his buoyant disposition stood him in good use, and he had faith to believe that all would be well.

At any rate his was the fortune of a soldier's life.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### AT MIDNIGHT.

The hours were on.

All had become quiet in the vicinity of Cavalry Sam's prison tent, and, despite his unpleasant situation, he began to feel sleepy.

He had the place all to himself, and, so far as having vent, he would not have known that any human being was within miles of him except the guard who paced steadily in front of the tent.

He thought I'll get a sound night's rest, despite the fact that I am in duress here," he said, with a yawn.

Then he lay down, wormed into a comfortable position, and all looked favorable for a speedy slumber.

Scarcely two minutes had passed when he became conscious that the wind was blowing freely from the quarter where lay his feet, and as he had noticed before the light was taken from him that the tent was very snug and close, the fact surprised him somewhat.

A closer notice revealed the fact that the wind was entering as it will where an opening exists to any extent in the side of a tent, and he partially arose and looked toward the windy locality.

He had hardly gained a sitting position, however, when a slight hiss sounded almost at his feet.

Very slight, indeed, was the sound, but his attentive hearing caught it, and he grew excited.

Some one was secretly entering the tent, if the signs went for anything, and that one might be a friend.

"Massa Sam!"

It was a very soft whisper, but the prisoner distinguished the two words and more. The whisper, the mode of address—all reminded of Edmund.

He drew up his feet quickly, but dared not speak.

"Am you dar, Massa Sam?"

"Yes, yes," he whispered in return.

"Alone?"

"Yes."

Then into the tent wriggled a dark figure, not an injudicious sound betraying its movement, and Edmund stood up as if it were a ghost, until it crept to his side and seized his hands.

Miraculous though the coming might be, Edmund was beside him, and the colored boy, bareheaded, his hands again and again, while Sam sat bewildered.

How the boy came to be in the Confederate camp he could not understand. Such things were occasionally done by spies, but Edmund—

"Bress de Lord, I'se done found you," the intruder said.

"Now in the world did you get here?"

Are you a prisoner, too, my boy?"

"Not much, sah? I'se a spy, I is; an' I'se done crawled a mile on my stomach. Bress de Lord, you cap'n, you don't know how I'se on stay wid dese truck, do you? No, sah. I tole Miss Vida, I would get you free, an' I'se goin' ter do it."

"How did you pass the pickets?"

"Crawled past dem; crawled on my stomach. We go back de same way."

"Can it be done?" Sam demanded, with more animation.

"Yes, sah, just as easy. All you got ter do is ter foller me. I'll take you fru Massa Sam."

Further conversation made matters clearer, Edmund, on learning the Carrington was a prisoner, had promptly followed the Confederates, and approached their camp close behind them.

He gave no particulars as to how he had passed the guards, except to say that, lacking the countersign, he had crawled past the various pickets. In this his knowledge of the ground had aided him greatly, but Sam still wondered.

"Now, Massa Cap'n, you hurry up, an' we will go back de same way I come," he added.

"I don't believe I can do it, but, by my life, I'll try," Carrington said. "Let us go at once. The guard may at any moment look in and find you."

The venture was promptly commenced. Edmund crawled a half through the side of the tent, and they easily passed out. Then the real work began, and for half a mile they must creep, where an enemy was liable at any moment to arise and give the alarm, while pickets must be passed—how, Sam did not know.

He felt perfectly helpless, and resigned the lead to Edmund very willingly.

The latter seemed equal to the emergency. At the very first he dropped on the ground, his unrelieved blackness making him seem like a rock or log, and with Sam at his heels the start was made.

The gallant captain must not be looked upon as an awkward bungler. His early experience with 'Ziah Strout in the swamp had taught him how to crawl silently and lightly, and he was at it at last, and thus stand how they were to escape the notice of the pickets.

For some distance their way lay along the side of the tent, where rock and bushes gave them cover, and made the pitching of tents impossible, and though the canvas tops and sleeping forms were seen terribly near at hand, the heart of the camp was soon passed. Then the danger was over, and now whose business it was to sleep; now for those who were allotted to keep awake.

Between the rougher part of the ridge and the wood, lay a tolerably smooth space, and all the way across this could be seen the forms of the recumbent soldiers.

Carrington paused in real apprehension.

"Heavens!" he said, "we can never pass these unsees."

"Stand straight an' walk fru' dem," said Edmund.

"We shall be seen and stopped."

"Dey can't see ter car' who is walkin' ober dem. Dey are dar to sleep. Nobody looked at me when I came an' I reckon, dey won't look when we go back."

A brief survey convinced Sam that there was no other way.

Either he must remain in the camp, or make the venture, and he was not a man to leave a chance untried.

"Lead on," he firmly said.

They advanced boldly, stepping between, and often over the sleeping Confederates.

It was a moment of thrilling suspense. Very moment they expected some one to rise up and confront them, and then, despite the darkness, Sam's uniform would betray all.

Luckily, no one stirred, and as they stepped over the men they took care not to brush against them.

The deeper shadow of the trees was reached and entered.

They went far beyond the camp proper, and only the pickets remained to be passed.

Only the pickets! There was a world of meaning in the simple trio of words.

No longer a sleeping but a watchful enemy, the pickets were alert, and their only way was to crawl past the posts.

Edmund seemed utterly regardless of danger, but his movements were as soft and cautious as a mouse, and he was a follower of Powhatan come back to fulfill a mission, and Sam was not less skillful.

"Crawl like a snake, Massa Sam," the negro said, and then they went forward again.

Through and under the bushes, as noiselessly as possible, but with the odds against them.

It was no pine wood where one could walk freely and make no sound, but dry sticks lay numerously under their feet.

Several rods were successfully passed, and then Edmund turned and touched Carrington's arm, at the same time pointing ahead. No words were needed.

Sam was a steady pacer, his beat, and knew the signal meant was at hand.

"Come," said the black guide.

Inch by inch they crawled on, steadily nearing the picket's line of travel, and then, several rods more, they came to a point where he had just been, and lay flat and silent.

The Confederate walked slowly back. He was a bold, many times looking soldier, of large frame, a bad enemy to meet, if appearances went for anything, and Sam almost expected his keen eyes would pierce the cover of the thicket and end in their ruin.

He passed so near that they could have touched him, reached the limit of his beat, wheeled and went back as before.

Almost opposite their ambush he suddenly paused, and then, as his rifle-lock sounded with startling clearness.

For a moment Sam had no doubt, but that they were seen, and a fierce light shone in his eyes as he heard the old familiar challenge.

"Halt! Who comes there?"

But a voice answered from beyond the line:

"A friend, with the countersign." Carrington experienced a revulsion of feeling, and the guard continued in his business-like way.

"Advance, friend, with the countersign." The previous speaker came forward, whispered the magic word over the presented bayonet, and then passed on to the interior of the camp, while the grim picket went his way.

He was a wide-awake guard, but he did not see the two forms that fitted across his beat, instantly dropping into the bushes, and only afterward see them hurrying cautiously away.

They had passed the last danger, however, and when half a mile away Edmund slowly turned.

"I'll have to inter trouble, Massa Sam, by hitchin' onto Jake Shelby when I did. Have I made amends for dat?"

"Nobly, Edmund, nobly!" declared the captain, and he added within his own ear he added his earnest thanks.

Then they went on to the Union camp, Edmund telling as they went what had occurred at Warburton's after Sam left.

All the bushwhackers had been caught and taken to the camp of the boys in blue—all except Shelby. He, having been left by Sam and 'Ziah, as before stated, had managed to get clear of his bonds and make good his escape.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### CEDAR CREEK.

Cavalry Sam and Edmund reached Sheridan's camp without further adventure, and the first man to greet them was 'Ziah Strout. He had been laying in wait to rescue Sam, but the work was happily off his hands.

Taken all in all, the day's work had been a good one, for the capture of the bushwhackers had left Jake Shelby without a man to his back. His own escape was deeply regretted, but time might yet bring him to justice.

The following morning 'Ziah rode over to Warburton's to assure the ladies that it was well with Carrington; and when he had made his report they felt wholly at ease. They had recovered from their own fright, and were calmly awaiting whatever fate had in store for them.

Another crisis was approaching in the Shenandoah Valley.

That day, General Sheridan left the army under the temporary command of Wright, the gallant commander of the Sixth Corps, and went to Washington on business of importance.

No one had a thought that trouble would occur in his absence. The Confederates were believed to be too thoroughly demoralized to risk an attack, and the position of the Union army was very strong.

The day after the departure of Crook, with Crook's corps in advance, Emory's a little behind, and Wright's—then in charge of Ricketts—to the right and rear of Emory. The cavalry of Torbert, Custer and Merrill had favorable positions, and Averill's gal-

lant command guarded the north fork of the Shenandoah, from Cedar Creek to Front River.

It was a position which only a brave or reckless man would dare to attack; for, by its disposal of streams and hills, nature had done as much as man to make it a strong one.

But Jubal Early's spirit was not yet broken.

He had suffered severe losses and reverses, but he determined to strike another blow, and his brave followers were not in the least reluctant.

His army had recently been strengthened by reinforcements from General Lee's army, with whom he had taken Potomac and was anxious to retrieve their waning fortunes.

The advance was made shortly after midnight, on the nineteenth of October, with Ransom, Gordon and Ransau on his right, and Kershaw and Wharton on the left, and with all possible secrecy they crept toward the unsuspecting Unionists.

To the right, the night could be invited to pass off as the roughest and darkest—patrols were used, and horse, foot and artillery moved along where one would scarcely have thought such a thing possible. Jubal Early led before the enemy trod by the right. It moved along the base of the Manassas Gap railway until the abrupt bend of the Shenandoah was reached, and then the stream was forded successfully, and men, horse and guns were pressing on to the north.

Not much further was the railroad followed; but, bearing to the north, they again approached the tortuous river. This time it was approached at a point east of Cedar Creek, and a crossing must be made. Colonel Penrock was with this wing, and as he saw the rolling wave before them he realized that the critical moment was at hand. He had to lead on the enemy to the counter Crook's corps, and then would come the tug of war.

If this movement failed, the valley would be left practically defenseless. One more effort would be made, and if it failed, the command—if, indeed, they were not crushed—and the fate of Virginia seemed poised on a narrow point.

Against the river was forded, and only dry land lay between the rival armies. The Confederates went on steadily. All possible caution was used, but so large a body of men could not move in silence. The tramp of their many feet echoed on the opposite bank, and caused the Unionists, but no information was gained of the determined advance; and, their movements screened by a fog which arose before dawn, the Confederates gained such position as they desired.

Just as day was breaking the Southerners received the order to attack, and then all along the line sounded the well-known voice of their muskets, and, with loud shouts, they rushed forward.

The Unionists awoke from slumber in confusion. They grasped their weapons and started for the trenches, but the Confederates were already there. They had gained their camp, and they meant to have more. Still shouting, they pressed on in gallant assault, and the bewildered and rudely awakened boys in blue could offer but little of the spirited resistance they should have rendered.

Under this unexpected and furious attack, Crook's corps soon went to pieces. The men were confused and dismayed, and not all the orders of the equally confused officers could keep the men intact. In utter disregard of order they went back in rapid retreat, leaving seven hundred of their number and numerous guns behind.

General Ransom was delighted, and General Ransau wrung the hand of Alfred Penrock as he complimented him on the way he had led his men.

"At last the tide has turned. We are going to get off all of our old debts!" he contentiously said.

It was the belief of all Early's army. They pressed on with enthusiasm, and struck the corps which will be remembered, the 1st Cavalry of Emory, in vain. They stay the tide of battle. He threw forward McMillen's brigade as a temporary check, but it was like a man trying to stop the current of Niagara.

It was to capture the men, the wounded, or prisoners, the brigade was hurled back on the main force.

Then Emory, too, was obliged to give ground, and the guns thus lost were turned on their former possessors with dreadful effect.

At this point, Early's right, led by Gordon, made itself particularly obnoxious to the

Unionists. They moved with an impetuosity which could not be resisted, and if a sharp retreat was made useless by Gordon's menacing attention.

While the Union left was being thus severely handled, the right was faring badly at the hands of Kershaw and Wharton, and General Wright, who, it will be remembered, was acting in Sheridan's place, felt compelled to order a general retreat.

Most fortunately for the fugitives, the Sixth corps was still in good condition, and while the others went on with utter disregard of order, these grim veterans covered the retreat in an admirable order. Only for that, it is possible that the entire army would have been captured.

Along the Winchester road they went until Middletown was reached, and there the broken columns were reformed. The men were fast regaining their presence of mind, but brightly plainly saw that they were not yet in condition for a successful stand, and he left back two miles further.

Early entered Middletown. Had his men been in condition to follow up their successes there is no knowing where it would have ended, but they had had sixteen hours of severe work, first in dragging their cannons over the hills and in fording the twisting creeks, and, later, in the fighting.

Consequently they paused at Middletown to eat, drink and rest. All this was necessary, but greater glory would have been Jubal Early's when darkness again fell if he had not captured the things and pressed on after the fleeing troops.

General Wright was delighted when informed that his enemy had paused. He had already halted his men, and the breathing spell gave him a chance to form his broken divisions.

This was speedily done, and, at ten o'clock, order had been formed out of chaos. Despite their heavy losses, the Unionists were full of courage, and their sagacious leaders told that they were not yet disposed to give up the battle.

#### CHAPTER XXVII.

##### RETREATING.

Sam Carrington had not been inactive during the night. As the day broke he felt a natural chagrin at his capture by the Confederates a little before, and, anxious to regain his lost laurels, he had fought as hard as any man when the Confederates were pushing him back.

When the first attack was made, he had been in his position among the cavalry, but in the confusion which followed few men succeeded in keeping where they belonged, and when General Gordon made his horse assault on the Union left, Cavalry Sam was among those who were there to receive it.

He saw as well as any that desperate endeavors were required to free the side, or the Union left would with all of his help, possibly be endeavored to sustain the wavering courage of the hard-pressed Unionists.

Twice his horse was shot under him, but he kept upon his feet, and was always to be found facing the enemy.

At one time, 'Ziah was fighting by his side, but they became separated and saw each other no more for some hours.

After the day had halted at Middletown, the scout went among the cavalry and looked for Sam. He was not to be found, and no one had seen him since the retreat fairly began.

His name grew prominent at the news. Full well he knew the young captain, and, being sure that he would never be found negligent in his duty, there could be no doubt but that he had met with some mishap; it seemed as though he must be dead or captured.

Convinced that no more was to be learned by inquiry, 'Ziah shouldered his rifle and strode from camp. He was a free man in the use of the word, and he was going to look for Cavalry Sam.

At the time when Emory's corps was disturbed by the flight into their faces of Crook's corps, the Union army, as a whole, heavily stricken by the Confederate veterans, Sam was in good condition and gallantly riding the third horse he had that day bestride.

Emory pushed forward McMillen's brigade, Sam joined them because he saw no better place to go. In that terrible vortex of battle, few men of the demoralized first line thought of finding their own command, and they were lost for the time.

McMillen went forward gallantly and it was not his fault that he failed to hold the enemy in check. They were too strong for

him, and, broken and decimated, his brigade was hurled back to join in the confusion that seized the Union ranks.

The captured guns were turned upon them with terrible effect, and then it was that Captain Carrington's third horse was killed beneath him.

He fell close to a thicket, luckily managing to free himself from the stirrups, but when he would have arisen a regiment of Confederates charged across the ground. One glance told him that Sam had to be made good with no more opposition there, and with a quick movement he gained the cover of the thicket.

A minute more and the boys in gray were all around him. Their triumphant cheers rang out clear and loud, and the cavalryman made up his mind to surrender quietly when once seen.

He was not seen just then. The regiment went on, and the ground was left to the dead and dying. Sam peered from the thicket, thinking of flight, but one glance was enough to convince him that it could not then be successfully accomplished.

He lay flat in the thicket and waited.

Scarcely had the Confederates gone, when a riderless horse dashed into view, looking frequently toward the quarter from which he had come, and seeming inclined to stop.

This he did near Sam's cover, and the latter's eyes at once became fixed upon him in an earnest gaze.

He was a fine animal; and, though it might be safer to creep away, the captain longed to gain his saddle, and use a more rapid means of locomotion.

He reflected, and resolved to run the risk, so he crept from his cover, and approached the horse.

He was easily secured, and then Sam mounted, and looked about for a way of joining the Union army.

Early's force was in the way, so he headed almost due east, and resolved to gain the desired ground by a wide detour.

At first he rode slowly, for he was liable to run upon the enemy at any moment; but luck favored him, and he soon felt safe in putting the horse to a gallop.

Wright's force was still in retreat, and Sam knew not where they would stop; but if his animal could not find a way to ride around everything, and regain them where he could.

In this way he neared a creek, where the ground was very familiar, and he headed for a well-known place, and he pushed on—to meet with another adventure.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

##### A PRETTY LITTLE SCHEME.

Sam had no fear that he would find any Confederates about the ford; but he eased up on his pace as he neared it, and used proper caution.

The trees were heavily wooded, and a sparser growth ran back on each side, and he walked his horse through this growth until he could have a view of the ford.

All was clear, he rode down and crossed; but just as he was about to push on, he saw something which caused him to abruptly take to cover.

Several horsemen were coming toward the ford, and he saw that they were not of uniform being suspicious in itself, he quickly pulled on his right rein, and secured cover in a thicket.

The fact that he was on much lower ground than the strangers had saved him from discovery.

They came on to the ford, and then he started at seeing the man at their head. It was Jake Stetley, and the men behind him were so similar in general appearance that it was evident he had quickly rallied more bushwhackers about him.

Luckily, they were only eight in number, and Sam was not so anxious to square old accounts with Stetley, that he was tempted to take a shot at him, and then try the effects of a charge; but he held back the rash impulse.

It was just as well that he did.

The boys in gray were passing the water's edge, to allow their horses to drink, and he plainly heard their words as they talked in an earnest way.

"I reckon the fight is all over," said Shelley. "The boys in gray have won, and more."

Early has scored a decisive victory, of I'm any judge."

"It is lucky for him that Sheridan was away," said another man.

"But we will see when Sheridan gets back!" inquired a third speaker. "Et won't take him long ter ride down from Winchester, an' you know his men will fol-



her whar he leads of they know of means death."

"I've been thinkin' o' that very thing," said Shelley, 'an' I think I see a chance fur us ter do a pretty bit o' business an' mobbe, get a sound reward. O' course word has long since ben sent ter Sheridan, an' he is on his way ter the scene o' battle. Waal, what sort o' an idee would it be fur us ter ambush him o' he comes ter us?"

"To ambush him?" repeated one of the other men.

"Yes; we have only ter lay by his road an' wait an' then when he comes I will directed shot will forever end his career; an' it may be, save Early fom another defeat."

The bushwhackers caught the idea, and an approving murmur ran through the crowd.

They were ready to aid the cause they so ignominiously upheld in all possible ways, and Shelby's scheme looked remarkably brilliant.

They spoke as one man to coincide with him; and then, their horses having satisfied themselves that they rode on across the ford.

Cavalry Sam was left alone, but a good-sized idea had been put in his head. These fellows mean harm to gallant Phil Sheridan; and, in some way, they must be prevented.

"I will ride to headquarters, and inform General Wright," was his instant decision.

Then he rode from the bushes, up the path from the ford; and, striking off across the open space, he made his way along the course of the stream at full speed.

At last he judged that his detour had been continued a sufficient length of time to take him past the Confederate lines, and he again crossed the creek, and headed in a course which he judged would take him to Middletown.

At that place, too, he believed General Wright would elect a rally, and he must see him as soon as possible.

He made a pretty correct estimate; but Wright, as before stated, had not thought himself so committed to fight at Middletown, and at that moment, was resting on the Winchester road beyond the town, while Early had paused within the place to recover his breath.

He had advanced dangerously near the village without suspecting the truth, when, suddenly, a score of riders in Union blue dashed out o' a wood in hot haste.

They pursued in a moment's surprise; but, a little later, when men in gray began to emerge from the same cover, he saw that the first party had need of haste.

They were outnumbered and hard pressed. Putting the spurs to his horse, he dashed across the field, and a shout arose from the Unionists.

They had promptly recognized him, and were shouting a hearty "Good day, respect." They were all of Averill's cavalry; and, best of all 'Ziah Strout rode at their head.

No wonder they cheered, for they were without an officer to lead them, and Cavalry Sam was a favorite with all.

He quickly joined them, said a few words of greeting, and then settled down beside 'Ziah to get all possible news, even while they continued at the rapid pace it would not do to break.

The scout described the position of both armies; and, by the time he had finished, they were well past Middletown and abreast of Cedar Creek; and, but for the close of the Confederates made it impossible for them to turn and join their army then; they must go on up the valley.

Sam told how he had gone out in search of Carrington; and, meeting the handful of cavalry that had become separated from the others while near Cedar Creek, had been forced into the general fight.

Sam looked back at the pursuers and longed to turn at bay, but they were outnumbered five to one, and it would not do. They were, then, well beyond the range from their army the fight must be continued.

Still, it nettled him, and he resolved to try his experiential knowledge.

A mile ahead lay two ridges which extended north and south, with a narrow valley between, and into this valley he resolved to ride.

But what he would do after that depended on the course of the pursuers. Any one slightly acquainted with the place would have said the valley was a death-trap, for it suddenly became a snare for the enemy. Sam knew every foot of the way, and knew, too, just how to get out if the enemy followed into the valley.

He hoped they would not do this, but, instead, divide their force, and ride around to cut off at the further end of the ridges; and this was what seemed most probable, for any one could see that more rapid riding could be done outside the ridges than between.

The result even surpassed his hopes.

He rode out of the scene and rode straight on, and then the pursuers divided into three parties. The first, comprising forty men, followed in his own tracks, the second and third, each numbering about thirty, went one to the right and the other to the left.

Sam was delighted. All was working to his liking, and if his men showed the mettle he expected, they would surely score a victory.

They were riding between steep bluffs which seemed impassable, but Cavalry Sam knew better. Half way through, he turned abruptly to the western ridge and went on off-gang. The men had been given his plan, and went where he led confidently.

At the indicated point, the bluffs fell back to slope, and by the time the first party of pursuers reached the place, they were surprised to see well, the bold Unionists were half way up, moving where it seemed impossible for a horse to stand.

Still, they resolved to follow, and at the third point the narrow path, of nature's own make, wound around where all seemed rough and wild.

Before they were half way up the fugitives were at the crest; by the time they reached that point, there was no sign of them. Where had they gone?

The second detachment soon learned to their sorrow. Going at a gallop, they were riding about a eighth the way to the top, when, suddenly, the Unionists were burst from a wooded place at the base of the ridge and struck their flank with resistless force.

Before many a man could get to his feet, never to rise again, and the confusion which always follows a cavalry move of the kind could not but ensue; but the boys in gray were not made of a yielding material, and they quickly rallied.

The first shock had reduced their number until the two forces were about equal, and each man quickly found his opponent, and sabers crossed with a vengeance.

Sam, however, had taken pains to make his followers understand that all depended on a quick victory, and with this idea strong in their minds, they fought with that which, aided by the surprise given the Confederates, soon settled the duel-at-large.

Many of the rebels went down, and then the others, who, unlikely for them, had no officer at the head, turned and fled along the back trail.

The Unionists did not pursue. They, too, wanted to run, and away they went toward the west.

Cavalry Sam, however, had not forgotten Jake Shelby and his plans, and as they were already two miles north of Wright's rallying point, he determined to go on and strike the Winchester turmpike to see if there was any sign that the bushwhackers were lying in wait for General Sheridan.

#### CHAPTER XXIX.

##### SHERIDAN'S RIDE.

It will be remembered that the cause of the fact that General Wright was in temporary command of Cedar Creek, was that the Union leader had gone to Washington on official business.

His business finished, Sheridan returned to his command, and was sleeping there the eventful night, when Early's force crept through the passes of the ridge and across the twice-forded Shenandoah to reach the Union position.

Early in the morning, that long to be remembered nineteenth of October, the booming of cannon was heard in Winchester, rolling up from the south with the tone so familiar to the ears of the Union men.

It was a startling sound, but, at first, Sheridan supposed it was caused only by a reconnaissance, and calmly made his breakfast without a suspicion of the great events which were to follow.

The meal finished, he mounted his horse and rode southward along the turmpike, accompanied by his escort, and not yet stirred into full activity. He was anxious to rejoin his boys in blue, but he little thought that at that moment, they were a badly whipped army, all in retreat, and many fleeing toward Winchester without any prospect of order.

When he had entered, before reaching King Kerstown, he met the van of the fugitives. They came in wild disorder, believ-

ing themselves closely pursued, and desperate as was the situation, it was magnified five-fold in their account to the amazed general.

Not long, however, did he wait to hear them talk. He saw the need of instant action, and was equal to the test. Bidding his escort follow, he again moved along the turmpike, this time at a tremendous gallop, and rode at a rapid rate of the way was rapidly left behind.

The crowd of fugitives increased in numbers as he went, but the sight of their loved leader in the van, and the van, warmed their blood, and they greeted him with cheers.

Swinging his hat around his head, "Little Phil" sent back encouraging words which were full of hope and victory for the millions in the future, who are, as yet, unborn.

"Face the other way, boys; face the other way. We are going back to our camp. We are going to lick them out of their boots."

Never was there an act more inspiring; never a deed which so went to the hearts of the men he led, filling them with a new courage, born of his own heroism and dashing presence.

The erstwhile panic-stricken fugitives drew a long breath as he receded, looked at each other questioningly, then paused, turned their faces to the west, as he directed, and the feeblest among them became brave.

Still over the road thundered the Union chief. His gallant horse seemed to understand the dire need of wondrous speed; he caught the inspiration of his master, and with his powerful form strained to the utmost spurned the hard road under his flying feet and cut down mile after mile of the retreating space.

Well might he speed, for much was at stake on that famous ride; well might he flash his eyes with pride, for never did a horse ride a more gallant course, or carry a more gallant load.

History was waiting to tell of man and horse.

Ride, Sheridan, ride, for your boys in blue need your potent voice; speed, proud horse, speed, for you are carrying your master South "to save the day."

Near the Winchester road, half way between that place and Middletown, a score of men in Union blue were moving slowly north. That they were not panic-stricken fugitives was shown by their orderly movements, and when we say that Cavalry Sam was at their head the reader will need no further indication.

Carrington was looking earnestly ahead, and his face suddenly brightened when 'Ziah Strout emerged from a wood and rode slowly down to meet them.

"Well?" questioned the scout quickly.

"I've found 'em," answered the scout. "Where?"

"Ambushed near the road in that very wood, Jake. Shelby is in his pride, an' I kin see that he is hankerin' ter speed the bullet that shall kill Phil Sheridan."

"He will never speed it," said Captain Carrington, sternly. "Prepare for fight, men, and we will sweep these dogs away."

"Wait," said 'Ziah.

"For what?"

"That's a hundred on them thar. Jake Shelby is a good man, an' they are five to our one."

"I don't care if there are five hundred. Boys, the Union must stand a vigorous charge, and we shall have them smothered in between ourselves and the men who are passing along the turmpike. What say you, shall we strike with a rush, and to kill?"

Every man answered affirmatively, and then 'Ziah smote himself on the thigh.

"Hurrah fur you, ye eternal slayers!" he said. "I knowed I must warn 'em, but I thought I was sure you men would get 'em, an' we will give Jake Shelby a lesson."

"It shall be his last, if I get a chance at him," the captain muttered.

'Ziah led the way and the cavalrymen followed in close silence; they were resolved to make a sure thing of it.

At the end of ten minutes they had gained the proper position for the proposed dash, and then only one word from Carrington was needed to hurl them on the foe.

In the underbrush, Jacob Shelby and his bushwhackers lurked and awaited the coming of the Union chief. Situated as they were, the odds were against them, but he aimed if once their rifles covered his gallant form, and though some of them feared that retribution would speedily follow the dash-

tarly died, they were resolved to risk all. But, without any warning, a sudden charge sounded, and the bushes behind them, and as they looked around, it was to see a body of men in Union blue dashing upon them with drawn sabers, too near to be avoided by the bulk of the bush-warriors.

It was one of those sudden dashes which made our civil war famous, and one of those gallant exploits which had earned for the young leader his reputation of "Cavalry Sam." And on the present occasion he cared nothing for the fact that the foe was five times his own number.

With a cheer they dashed among the bushes-warriors, who had left their own horses at one side, and then revolver and saber were busy. The crack of the former was often followed by the vicious sound of the latter as it struck flesh and bone, and out over the steel cleft the little streams of red as they were sent home.

Shelley's voice arose, urging his men to stand firm, and though a full score ran away at the first, the others obeyed and fought bravely.

The advantage was against them, however, despite their superior numbers, for while they fought on foot, the Unionists galloped about and struck wherever a head was to be seen.

Dead and dying men soon covered the ground, but not one was Union blue. It was hard to get at the advantage of Providence seemed to shield them from the enemy's bullets.

"Ziah was ever at the front, and his loud cheers arose frequently as he fought in his own way."

Cavalry Sam seemed to bear a charmed blade and a charmed life. No one could reach his person with steel or ball, and where he fought the destruction was terrible.

His gaze was ever roving in search of Jake Shelley, and at last he saw him at the outskirts of the battle.

The guerrilla chief had seen that the fight was against his gang, and had resolved to save himself, happen what might to those he left behind.

Sam spurred toward him. "Hold, you scoundrel!" he shouted. "You and I have a debt to settle! Hold, where you are!"

Shelley had no heart to obey, for he feared the man he had once hunted with blood-lust, but he was so tired that he must either turn and fight or be overtaken and run the risk of being attacked in the rear, so he wheeled and faced his enemy with a saber in his hand.

"Villain!" exclaimed the captain, as he reined in his horse so suddenly that the earth was flung high in the air. "I have you at last. We will fight to the death, but it shall be on equal terms."

They sabered, crossed, and then began a desperate combat. What Shelley lacked in science he made up in strength and zeal, while his guard was really very good. Stroke for stroke, parry for parry, a wall of steel seemed to be between them, and the clash echoed strangely through the wood.

Unknown to either, for they had eyes only for themselves, the other men were done with fight. The guerrillas had fled or were retreating, and the boys in blue stood around the duels, silently watching.

#### CHAPTER XXX.

##### HOW SHERIDAN KEPT HIS WORD.

Cavalry Sam began to press his opponent sharply. He had found that all the fellow's prowess lay in self-defense; he dared not make a determined assault himself. At the last, his was fighting only with a vague hope that some lucky chance would give him the victory.

Sam's movements became bewildering. His saber seemed everywhere at once. The wall of steel wavered, and then he was on the ground, and felt a strong desire to wheel and run. Already he was breathing hard, while Sam was as fresh as ever.

Suddenly a shout went up from the boys in blue. The bush-warrior was down; and as they saw the blood gush out over his breast, they knew he had received his last hurt.

With a powerful effort he raised himself on his elbow, and reached for his fallen weapon.

He never gained it. Even as his fingers

were about to close upon it, he gasped, trembled, and then fell back with a moan. He had gone on his last raid.

The victory was complete. Many guerrillas lay dead on the ground, others were prisoners, and the remainder had gone away in swift flight.

The dash had resulted well.

Out on the highway went the boys in blue. Down the hard road came a horseman at whom all looked with joy. Cheers greeted him; and without a word of reproach to the fugitives, he swung his hat as he came, and uttered words of encouragement.

Sheridan was nearing the goal.

Bluecoat Carrington and his handful of bluecoats fell into the rear, and the remaining wheels were soon passed.

When Sheridan entered the Union camp he found matters much better than he had dared hope. General Wright had been doing all that man could to get the troops into order and ready for an attack in turn, and Sheridan approved of all he had done.

"I have camps and all these cannon back again," said the plucky Sheridan, as he rode along the front and gave to each regiment the encouraging words which made them cheer louder even than the fugitives had cheered.

Preparations for an advance went on steadily, and at three o'clock the order for moving came.

The Unionists were no longer a beaten and demoralized army. At one o'clock Emory had won one move in the game by repulsing an attack, all of which went to brighten the vision of the boys in blue; and when Sheridan came down among them, no more was needed.

They felt sure of victory.

When the army moved, a firm and resolute column of veterans set their faces toward the rear, and went on steadily.

Captain Carrington had rejoined his command, but he found many a man missing who had spoken with him but twenty-four hours before. Now, they were going to seek satisfaction.

The first line of the Confederates was attacked with zeal. They stood firm for a while, but the pressure was too strong, and they fell back to give the Unionists room.

With the renewed boom of the great guns came new destruction for the Unionists, and the leaden storm was so hot that for a while they were checked, but their leader was equal to the emergency.

Enough veterans were brought into active use, and two gallant charges sufficed to carry their position.

At such a time the cavalry came down heavily on both of Early's flanks, and under this resistless pressure the boys in gray could not stand.

Confusion seized upon the whole Confederacy, and with an impetuosity which exceeded their own at Cedar Creek, they turned and fled in great disorder. Through Middletown they went in a way which exceeded Sheridan's dispatch after the battle of a former occasion. "We have just seen the enemy whirling through Winchester."

Beyond the latter place the road was narrow and poor, and it soon became filled with cannon, wagons and the like, all in a confusion, and the danger of losing his whole army if he tarried to look after them, influenced Early to leave them where they were and save his men if nothing more.

His broken army, an army which was destined to never again fight a battle in the Shenandoah Valley. Almost utterly ruined, they had no resources at their command, and on that day the war in the Shenandoah practically ended.

Sheridan had kept his word, and made for himself a name destined to live forever in American history.

Our account of Cavalry Sam may well end in detail with that great day in the valley, though there is much more that might be written.

Let us briefly say that his services on that day earned for him a major's commission, and that he was with General Custer in his encounter with Early at Waynesboro on the second of the following March, and in the daring exploits that followed. Another story has been written of the adventures when he went under the brave Sheridan to aid Grant in capturing Richmond.

How that undertaking succeeded, is well known, and when General Lee fled he surrendered the remnant of his rebel battle-torn army, it was Colonel Samuel Carrington, who silently thanked Heaven that

there would be no more war in his native land.

And one day he asked permission to hold an interview with General Alfred Penrock, who was among those to surrender, and the friends met as brothers once more.

"Am I?"

"Sam!"

And as their hands crossed they forgot that they were dignified officers, and that they had fought on opposing sides through long years.

War there had been, dark and dreadful, but their hearts were the same as when they played together as children under the shadow of the whispering pines.

Let us take a parting glance at all our characters one year later.

In the Shenandoah Valley, all is once more peace and quiet. War has vanished and business has been resumed. New houses have gone up where old ones stood, and on the Carrington and Penrock plantations these are especially fine.

The Warrenton mansion is ablaze with light, and all the people around know that on that evening both Augusta and Vida are to be married. The younger sister it is who is to become Mrs. Carrington, but Augusta feels that she is not ready.

Once, she cared for Sam with more than common tenderness, but her affection turned to Alfred, and now she is as happy as any there.

Outside the house, two men stand together earnestly talking. One is Ziah Strout, the other, Edmund Smith.

"Bress de Lord," says the latter; "I neither was so happy before. Did you see how low did I look? Oh, dis am a glorious occasion."

"Right you are. Cleon, right you are," says the scout, with emotion. "Et beats all the wedding I ever seed. No triginy, an' you am all done take a breakdown 'when we get time."

And then Aunt Molly opens the door.

"Hil you men, what you dois' dar? Don't you dere keep de wedding' waitin'. Come right in dis minute, an' mind you behave well afore de minister!"

May peace and prosperity ever hover over the beautiful Valley of the Shenandoah.

THE END.

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